LETTERS

TO A

PHILOSOPHICAL UNBELIEVER.

PART I.

CONTAINING

An Examination of the principal Objections to the Doctrines of *Natural Religion*, and eſpecially thoſe contained in the Writings of Mr. HUME.

THE SECOND EDITION.

By JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D. F.R.S.

AC. IMP. PETROP. R. PARIS. HOLM. TAURIN. AUREL. MED. PARIS. HARLEM. CANTAB. AMERIC. ET PHILAD. SOCIUS.

SCILICET HAUD SATIS EST RIVOS SPECTARE FLUENTES——
FONTEM IPSUM SPECTARE JUVAT.

ANTI LUCRETIUS.

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MDCCLXXXVII.

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TO

WILLIAM TAYLEUR, Esq.

OF SHREWSBURY.

DEAR SIR,

I Shall think myſelf highly honoured, if, in dedicating this work to you, I can perpetuate the memory of our friendſhip, and at the ſame time procure for revealed religion the advantage that it may derive from the knowledge of your zealous attachment to it.

We live in an age in which many perſons of a philoſophical turn of mind are diſpoſed to reject revelation. This you and I equally lament. But we conſider it as a temporary circumſtance, ſince the

principles of true philoſophy lead to the moſt ſatisfactory concluſion in favour of it; and therefore we doubt not but that, in due time, the juſtneſs of the concluſion will be apparent to all who give ſufficient attention to the ſubject.

It is, we are ſenſible, either a miſunderſtanding of the nature and object of revealed religion (ariſing from the manifold corruptions and abuſes of it) or an inattention to the nature of its evidence, that is the cauſe of the preſent unbelief. But when theſe corruptions and abuſes ſhall be clearly traced to their ſource, and this ſource ſhall appear to be ſomething quite foreign to the genuine principles of this religion; and when the evidence of the facts, on which the truth of it depends, ſhall appear to reſt on the very ſame found-

ation

ation with all our *faith in hiſtory*, nothing will be wanting to the complete ſatisfaction of the truly philoſophical and the candid.

In the mean time, it is, no doubt, to be lamented, that ſo many of thoſe perſons who are joined with us in the inveſtigation of natural phenomena, who, together with ourſelves, receive ſo much pleaſure from the diſcovery of the laws to which they are ſubject, ſhould be ſo far disjoined from us, when we begin to look a little farther into the ſame glorious ſyſtem; that they ſhould attend with rapture to the voice of nature, and not raiſe their thoughts beyond this, to the author of nature. It gives us equal concern, that others ſhould acknowledge the voice of God in his works, and yet turn a deaf ear when the ſame great Being condeſcends to diſplay his power,

and to ſignify his will, in a ſtill more direct and emphatical manner, and reſpecting things of infinitely more moment to us than any thing that can engage our attention here.

We are concerned to perceive that every thing that is the object of our ſenſes, and that relates to this life, ſhould be ſo highly prized by them; and yet that they ſhould ſhew a perfect indifference with reſpect to the continuance of life, in a future and better ſtate, in which we ſhall have an infinitely wider field of enquiry, and which we ſhall enter upon with the advantage of all the experience that we have acquired in the methods of inveſtigation here.

But this circumſtance has ariſen from influences which we truſt are daily diminiſhing. True philoſophy neceſſarily inſpires

ſpires the greateſt veneration for the conſtitution and laws of nature. It therefore leads to devotion, and conſequently to the practice of all virtue. And when the pious philoſopher ſhall be convinced that there is nothing *irrational* in that religion which alone teaches the great doctrine of *a future life*, he will, at leaſt with that candour, and that cool and diſpaſſionate temper, which accompanies him in all his other enquiries, attend to the evidences of it. And when he ſhall find that he is ſo far from being required, on his approaching the province of revelation, to depart from thoſe *rules of philoſophizing* which have the ſanction of all our experience, that the purſuit of them neceſſarily carries him into it (ſo that he muſt even ceaſe to be a philoſopher, if he refuſe to be a chriſtian) he will rejoice in the union of

two ſuch characters, and will continue his reſearches with double ſatisfaction; confident that whatever may be begun and left imperfect here, will be reſumed and completed hereafter; that nature, and the author of nature, will be for ever the delightful objects of his veneration, and furniſh an inexhauſtible ſource of employment, and of happineſs.

We are ignorant, indeed, of the particulars of our condition in a future ſtate (and the wiſdom of divine providence is conſpicuous in this our ignorance) but we may aſſure ourſelves that, continuing to be a part of the ſame great ſyſtem, of which the preſent ſtate is only the commencement, and under the government of the ſame great and good Being, we ſhall be poſſeſſed of whatever ſhall be requiſite for our

our own happineſs, and of the means of promoting the happineſs of others.

You, Sir, have always been happy in your attachment to mathematical and philoſophical ſtudies, but more ſo in your juſt preference of theological ones. Theſe employ, and brighten, the evening of your life, as they did that of the great Newton, whoſe example, if it were neceſſary, would alone be a ſufficient juſtification of us, in uniting two purſuits which are too often conſidered as the reverſe of each other. You, therefore, naturally join with me in wiſhing to recommend to others thoſe ſtudies which give ſo much ſatisfaction to ourſelves.

Your attachment to the cauſe of genuine chriſtianity was conſpicuous in your relinquiſhing

quiſhing a trinitarian form of worſhip, and adopting an unitarian one, in your own family, till you had procured it a more public and permanent eſtabliſhment. Fortitude in ſuch a cauſe as this, while the world in general is too ready to acquieſce in every thing that has the countenance of *faſhion* and of *power*, is truly worthy of a chriſtian philoſopher; and ſuch an example as you have ſet cannot be too generally known, being ſo rare, and therefore ſo much wanted. The great Newton, though an unitarian, had not the courage to declare himſelf, and act as one.

Notwithſtanding the preſent general averſion to theological enquiries, among perſons engaged in philoſophical purſuits, we are by no means ſingular in our reſpect for them; and ſuch examples as yours, when

ſufficiently known, muſt contribute to make us ſtill leſs ſo. With the view of accelerating ſo deſirable an event was this work compoſed; and ſhould it, in the ſmalleſt degree, be the means of accompliſhing ſo great an end, it will give me more ſatisfaction than any other of my publications.

With the greateſt reſpect, I am,

Dear Sir,

Your moſt obliged humble ſervant,

J. PRIESTLEY.

BIRMINGHAM,
FEB. 1, 1787.

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LETTERS

THE

PREFACE

TO

PART I.

IT will, I think, be acknowledged by all perſons who are capable of reflection, and who *do* reflect, that, in the whole compaſs of ſpeculation, there are no queſtions more intereſting to all men than thoſe which are the ſubject of theſe *Letters*, viz. Whether the world we inhabit, and ourſelves who inhabit it, had an intelligent and benevolent author, or no proper author at all? Whether our conduct be inſpected, and we are under a righteous government, or under no government at all? And, laſtly, whether we have ſomething to hope and fear beyond the grave, or are at liberty to adopt the Epicurean maxim, *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die?* This may ſtrike us more forceably if we

attend a little to the principles of human nature.

The great ſuperiority of man over brutes conſiſts in the greater *comprehenſiveneſs of his mind*, by means of which he is, as it is commonly expreſſed, capable of *reflection*, but, more accurately ſpeaking, capable of contemplating, and, therefore, of enjoying, the *paſt* and the *future*, as well as the *preſent*. And, what is moſt extraordinary and intereſting to us, this power, as far as appears, has no limits.

In infancy we feel nothing but what affects us for the moment; but *preſent feelings* bear a leſs and leſs proportion to the general maſs of ſenſation, as it may be called, conſiſting of various elements, the greateſt part of which are borrowed from the *paſt* and the *future*; ſo that, in our natural progreſs in intellectual improvement, all temporary affections, whether of a pleaſurable or of a painful nature, will come at length to be wholly inconſiderable; and we ſhall have, in a greater

a greater degree than we can at preſent conceive, an equable enjoyment of the whole of what we *have been*, and *have felt*, and alſo of what we have a confident *expectation of being*, and of feeling, in future.

Our progreſs, however, in this intellectual improvement is capable of being accelerated, or retarded, according as we accuſtom ourſelves to reflection, or live without it. For certainly, though, while we retain the faculties of memory and reaſoning, we cannot, whether we chuſe it or not, wholly exclude reflection on the paſt, or anticipation of the future (and, therefore, ſome kind of advance in intellectual improvement, is unavoidable to all beings poſſeſſed of intellect) yet it is in our power to exclude what is of great moment, viz. all that is *voluntary* in the buſineſs; ſo that being, in a great meaſure, deaf to what is behind, and blind to what is before, we may give ourſelves up to mere ſenſual gratifications, and, conſequently, no queſtion concerning what is *paſt*, or *future*, may intereſt us. In this ſtate of mind a

man may think it abſurd to trouble himſelf either about how he came into the world, or how he is to go out of it.

It would be too haſty, however, to aſſert, that it can only be in this very loweſt ſtate of intellect, a life of mere ſenſation, or very imperfect reflection, that any perſon can be unconcerned about the belief of a God, and the doctrines of natural religion. For a man may get above mere ſenſual indulgence, and give great ſcope to his intellectual faculties with reſpect to ſome objects, and be wholly inattentive to others. And it is in the power of little things, by wholly occupying the mind, not only to exclude the conſideration of greater things, but even the idea of their being greater.

This, indeed, comes within the deſcription of a kind of proper *inſanity*; but then it may be juſtly aſſerted, that, in a greater or leſs degree, all perſons who do not prize every thing according to its real value, and regulate their purſuits accordingly, are inſane;

ſane; though, when the degree is ſmall, it paſſes unnoticed, and when the conſequences are inconſiderable, it is far from being offenſive. Nay, in ſome caſes, the world derives great and manifeſt advantage from a partial diſorder, as it may be called, of this kind. For great excellence in particular arts and ſciences is perhaps ſeldom attained without it. Indeed, it cannot be expected, that a man ſhould greatly excel in ſome things without neglecting, and, conſequently, undervaluing others.

We are ſhocked at a man's inſanity only when it makes him inattentive to things that immediately concern him, as to the neceſſary means of his ſubſiſtence or ſupport, ſo that he muſt periſh without the care of others. But when the intereſt, though real, is *remote*, a man's inattention to it paſſes unnoticed. By this means it is that, without being ſurpriſed, or ſhocked, we every day ſee thouſands, who profeſs to believe in a future world, live and die without making any

proviſion for it; though their conduct is much more inexcuſable than that of the atheiſt, who, not believing in futurity, minds only what is preſent.

But though the conduct of the atheiſt be conſiſtent with itſelf, it muſt give concern to thoſe who are not atheiſts, and who have a juſt ſenſe of the importance of the belief of a God, of a providence, and of a future ſtate, to the preſent dignity, and the future happineſs of men.

An atheiſt may be temperate, good-natured, honeſt, and, in the common, and leſs extended ſenſe of the word, a *virtuous* man; becauſe, if he be a man of good underſtanding, of naturally moderate paſſions, and have been properly educated, the influences to which he will have been expoſed may be ſufficient to *form* thoſe valuable and amiable habits, and to *fix* him in them. But, notwithſtanding this, an atheiſt has neither the *motive*, nor the *means*, of being what he

he might have been, if he had not been an atheiſt.

An atheiſt cannot have that ſenſe of *perſonal dignity* and *importance* that a theiſt has. For he who believes that he was introduced into life without any deſign, and is ſoon to be for ever excluded from life, cannot ſuppoſe that he has any very important part to act in life; and, therefore, he can have no motive to give much attention to his conduct in it. The paſt and the future being of leſs conſequence to him, he will naturally endeavour to think about them as little as poſſible, and make the moſt of what is before him. But the neceſſary conſequence of this is the *debaſement of his nature*, or a foregoing of the advantages that he might have derived from that power of comprehenſion, which will have full ſcope in the theiſt; the man who conſiders himſelf as a link in an immenſely connected chain of being, as acting a part in a *drama*, which commenced from eternity, and extends to

eternity; who conſiders that every gratification, and every action, contributes to form a *character*, the importance of which to him is, literally ſpeaking, infinite; who conſiders himſelf as ſtanding in the neareſt and moſt deſirable relation to a being of infinite power, wiſdom, and goodneſs; a being who gives unremitted attention to him, who plans for him, and conducts him through this life, who does not loſe ſight of him even in the grave, and who will, in due time, raiſe him to a life, which, with reſpect both to gratifications and purſuits, will be of unſpeakably more value to him than the preſent, and whoſe views with reſpect to him and the univerſe are boundleſs.

A man who really believes this, and who gives that *attention* to it which its great importance to him manifeſtly requires, muſt be *another kind of being* than an atheiſt, and certainly a being of unſpeakably greater dignity and value. His *feelings* and his *conduct* cannot but be greatly ſuperior.

This,

This, however, from the nature of the thing, muſt depend upon the *attention* that a theiſt gives to his principles, and to the ſituation in which he believes himſelf to be placed. And, therefore, it is very poſſible that a merely *nominal believer* in a God may be a *practical atheiſt*, and worſe than a mere ſpeculative one, living as *without God in the world*, intirely thoughtleſs of his being, perfections, and providence. But ſtill, nothing but *reflection* is wanting to reclaim ſuch a perſon, and recover him to a proper dignity of ſentiment, and propriety of conduct; whereas an atheiſt thus ſunk has not the ſame *power of recovery*. He wants both the *diſpoſition* and the neceſſary *means*. His mind is deſtitute of the *latent ſeeds* of future greatneſs.

If, according to the obſervation of Lord Bacon, it be *knowledge* that conſtitutes *power*: if it be our knowledge of the external world that gives us ſuch extenſive power over *it*, and adds to our happineſs in it, knowledge

ſo

ſo materially reſpecting ourſelves, our general ſituation, and conduct, muſt have great power over *ourſelves*. It muſt, as it were, new make us, and give us ſentiments and principles greatly ſuperior to any that we could otherwiſe be poſſeſſed of, and add to our *happineſs* as much as it does to our *dignity*.

If, as Mr. Hume obſerves, in his *Eſſay on the Natural Hiſtory of Religion*, p. 114, "the "*good*, the *great*, the *ſublime*, and the *raviſh*-"*ing*, be found evidently in the genuine "principles of theiſm," I need not ſay that there muſt be ſomething *mean*, *abject*, and *debaſing*, in the principles of atheiſm. If, as he alſo ſays, p. 116, a people intirely devoid of religion are ſure to be but "a few degrees "removed from brutes," they muſt be this, or ſomething worſe than this, who, having been acquainted with the principles of religion, have diſcarded them. The conſiſtency of theſe ſentiments with thoſe advanced in other parts of Mr. Hume's writings, it is not my buſineſs to look to.

I ſhall

I ſhall think myſelf happy if, in theſe *Letters*, I have advanced any thing that may tend either to leſſen the number of ſpeculative atheiſts, or, which is no leſs wanting, convert nominal believers into practical ones. It is not, in general, *reaſon* and *argument*, but the pleaſures and buſtle of the world that prevent both; and proper moderation in our deſires and purſuits, accompanied with ſerious reflection, would be of the greateſt uſe in both caſes. I wiſh to give occaſion, and to furniſh the means, for this cool recollection of ourſelves.

It is the too eager purſuit of pleaſure, wealth, ambition, and I may add of the arts, and even of ſcience (theological ſcience itſelf not wholly excepted) that is our ſnare. All theſe may equally *occupy the mind*, to the excluſion of the greater views that open to us as *men*, and ſubjects of moral government; who are but in the infancy of an endleſs, and, therefore, an infinitely important exiſtence. All theſe purſuits are equally capable of confining

fining our attention to what is immediately before us, and of hiding from our view whatever in the paſt, or the future, moſt nearly concerns us to attend to.

The great *book of nature* is always open before us, and our eyes are always open upon it; but we paſs our time in a kind of *reverie*, or abſence of thought, inattentive to the moſt obvious connexions and conſequences of things. The ſame is the caſe with the *book of revelation*. But it is the former only that I have a view to in the preſent publication.

My deſign, however, is to proceed to conſider the ſpeculative difficulties which attend the doctrines of *revelation*, with philoſophical and thinking perſons in the preſent age, if the reception of this part ſhall give me ſufficient encouragement to proceed farther. But if I ſucceed in this firſt part, I ſhall conſider my great object as nearly attained; there being, as I have reaſon to think, many more

more atheiſts at preſent, than mere unbelievers in revelation, eſpecially out of England; and, for my part, I cannot help conſidering the difficulties that attend the proof of the Jewiſh and chriſtian revelations, as not greater than thoſe which relate to the doctrines of natural religion.

Whenever, therefore, I ſhall hear of the converſion of a ſpeculative atheiſt to *ſerious deiſm* (an event which has never yet come to my knowledge) I ſhall have little doubt of his ſoon becoming a ſerious chriſtian. As, on the other hand, the ſame turn of mind that makes a man an unbeliever in chriſtianity has, in fact, generally carried men on to a proper atheiſm. But, in both caſes, this progreſs in ſpeculation requires ſome degree of *attention* to the ſubject; for, with a total *liſtleſſneſs and unconcern*, a man may reſt *any where*. He may underſtand the firſt book of Euclid, and have no knowledge of the ſecond, and therefore, no opinion about any of the propoſitions in it.

In both parts of this work it is my wiſh to ſpeak to *the preſent ſtate of things*, and to conſider the difficulties that really preſs the moſt, without diſcuſſing every thing belonging to the ſubject; for which I muſt refer to more ſyſtematic writers, and for a ſhort view of the whole chain of argument, with ſome original illuſtrations, to my *Inſtitutes of natural and revealed Religion*.

In ſome reſpects, I may, perhaps, flatter myſelf that I write with more advantage than any of thoſe who have preceded me in the ſame argument, as I ſhall particularly endeavour to avail myſelf of the real ſervice that infidelity has been of to chriſtianity, in freeing it from many things which, I believe, all who have formally undertaken the defence of it have conſidered as belonging to it; when they have, in reality, been things quite foreign to it, and in ſome caſes ſubverſive of it. I ſhall hope, therefore, to exhibit a view of chriſtianity to which a *philoſopher* cannot have ſo much to object, every thing that I ſhall

ſhall contend for, appearing to me perfectly conſonant to the principles of ſound philoſophy; and I ſhall uſe no other *modes of reaſoning* than thoſe that are univerſally adopted in ſimilar caſes, as I hope to make appear. Whether I ſucceed to my wiſh or not, I ſhall be *ingenuous*, and as impartial as I can. As to any bias that I may lie under, thoſe who know me, and my ſituation, are the beſt judges; it being impoſſible I ſhould be aware of this myſelf. Whatever cauſe we ourſelves wiſh well to, we neceſſarily imagine we have ſufficient reaſon for ſo wiſhing.

I am far from meaning to hold myſelf forth as an oracle in this buſineſs; but I ſhall be really obliged to any perſon who ſhall propoſe to me any objection that he really thinks materially to affect the credibility of the Jewiſh or the Chriſtian ſyſtem. No objection ſo propoſed to me ſhall paſs unnoticed, whether I be able to give ſatisfaction with reſpect to it, or not. If I myſelf feel the difficulty, I ſhall freely acknowledge it, and endeavour to eſtimate the force of it.

I, to-

I, together with the perſons to whom I am addreſſing myſelf, am a ſpeculative inhabitant of the earth, actuated by the ſame paſſions, engaged in a variety of the ſame purſuits, and (as we have not yet made any diſcovery that will enable us to cure the diſeaſe of *old age*, and to prolong life *ad libitum*) I, together with them, am haſtening to the grave; and therefore I am equally intereſted with them to find whether any thing awaits us after death, and, if any thing, what it is. This is, in its own nature, a more important object of enquiry than any thing that we have hitherto ſo laborioufly inveſtigated. It behoves us, therefore, to be cool and patient, attentive to every circumſtance that can throw light upon the great queſtion, and to give one another all the aſſiſtance we can with reſpect to it.

Truth, and the *laws of nature*, are our common object; but we are neceſſarily more *intereſted* in the inveſtigation, in proportion to the *magnitude* of the object, and the *concern* we have in it. In theſe queſtions, therefore

fore, there is a concurrence of every thing that can render the inveſtigation intereſting to us; and as there is no interference of *particular intereſts* in the caſe, there is all the reaſon imaginable to lay aſide every prejudice, to unite our labours, and give one another all the aſſiſtance in our power, either by *propoſing difficulties*, or *ſolving* them. Aſſiſtance, in either of theſe forms, I ſincerely intreat, and ſhall be truly thankful for.

With reſpect to this publication, concerning *natural religion*, it may not be improper to obſerve, as I did in my *Inſtitutes of Natural and Revealed Religion*, vol. I. p. 3. "that, "in giving a delineation of natural religion, "I ſhall deliver what I ſuppoſe *might* have "been known concerning God, our duty, "and our future expectations, by the light of "nature, and not what was *actually* known "of them by any of the human race: for "theſe are very different things. Many "things are in their own nature attainable, "which, in fact, are never attained; ſo that

" though we find but little of the knowledge " of God, and of his providence, in many " nations, which never enjoyed the light of " revelation, it does not follow, that nature " did not contain, and teach thoſe leſſons, " and that men had not the means of learn- " ing them, provided they had made the " moſt of the light they had, and of the " powers that were given them."

" I ſhall, therefore, include, under the " head of *natural religion*, all that can be " *demonſtrated*, or proved to be true, by na- " tural reaſon, though it was never, in fact, " diſcovered by it; and even though it be " probable, that mankind would never have " known it without the aſſiſtance of reve- " lation."

Mr. Hume acknowledges, that the hypotheſis which would moſt naturally occur to uninſtructed mankind, to account for appearances in the world, would be that of *a multiplicity of deities*; and of what mankind, who

who have been, as far as appears, altogether, or nearly ſelf-taught, in this reſpect, have been capable, in many hundred, and, in ſome caſes, probably, thouſands of years, we have evidence enough. The experiment, as we may call it, has been tried both among the civilized and the uncivilized of our race.

Nothing, therefore, that I have advanced in this work, can be at all underſtood to leſſen the great value of revelation, even admitting, what is far from being probable, that, in ſome very diſtant age of the world, men might have attained to a full perſuaſion concerning all the great truths of religion, as the unity of God, the doctrine of a reſurrection to immortal life, and a ſtate of future retribution. What the moſt enlightened of our race had conjectured concerning theſe things, in fact, led them rather farther from the truth, than nearer to it, and never made much impreſſion on the generality of mankind.

Plain as the great argument contained in theſe *letters* is, viz. that which eſtabliſhes the belief of *a God*, and a *benevolent providence*, I have not been able to reply to the objections that have been ſtarted on the ſubject, in ſuch a manner as that I can promiſe myſelf will be perfectly intelligible to *all* my readers. But, in general, thoſe perſons, who cannot fully comprehend the anſwers, will not be able to ſee the force of the objections; and therefore, if they have no doubts themſelves, and have no occaſion to make themſelves ſo far maſters of the argument, as to enable them to ſatisfy the doubts of others, they may very well content themſelves with entirely omitting, or giving but little attention to the third, fourth, twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth Letters.

I give this notice, leſt perſons not uſed to metaphyſical ſpeculations, looking into thoſe particular Letters, and finding unexpected difficulties in the ſubject of them, ſhould haſtily conclude, that the whole is a buſineſs

of

of *ſubtle diſputation*, with reſpect to which, they could never hope to attain to any ſatisfactory determination; and therefore, that they may as well leave it to be diſcuſſed by idle and ſpeculative people, without concerning themſelves about it. Whereas, nothing can be more momentous in itſelf, or more important to be known, and *attended to*, than the general doctrine of theſe Letters; and it equally concerns the wiſe and the ignorant, men of ſpeculation or men of buſineſs, thoſe who are capable of the greateſt refinement, and thoſe who cannot refine at all. For how different ſoever our turns of thinking, or modes of life, may be, we are all equally ſubjects of God's moral government, if there be a God, and a governor, and equally *heirs of immortality*, if there be any immortality for man.

Some may conſider the critical review of Mr. Hume's metaphyſical writings, in the laſt of theſe Letters, as ungenerous, now that he is dead, and unable to make any

reply. But this circumſtance makes no difference in his particular caſe, as it was a maxim with him (and perhaps one inſtance of the great *wiſdom* that Dr. Smith aſcribes to him) to take no notice of any objections to his writings; and he has left behind him a guardian of his reputation, of ability, in my opinion, fully equal to his own, and whoſe friendſhip for him cannot be queſtioned.

I think it proper to obſerve in this place, that there is an inaccuracy in p. 398 of my *correſpondence with Dr. Price*. There I ſay that "the reaſon, or account, of the exiſtence "of the *Divine Being*, cannot be the ſame "with that of the exiſtence of *ſpace*, or *du*-"*ration*." Whereas, I ſhould have ſaid, that

that "though there may be the ſame ne-
"ceſſity for the exiſtence of the deity, and
"for that of ſpace, or duration, we are not
"able to *ſee* it." And what I immediately ſubjoin, as a reaſon for the aſſertion, will better apply to this more accurate ſtate of the caſe, viz. "I can, in any caſe, form an
"idea of the non-exiſtence both of all
"*effects*, and of all *cauſes*; and conſequently
"both of the *creation*, and of the *creator*,
"and of the non-exiſtence of the latter, juſt
"as eaſily as of that of the former; but
"ſtill the ideas of *ſpace* and *duration* re-
"main in the mind, and cannot be excluded
"from it." This correction will be found neceſſary to prevent an inconſiſtency between the aſſertion, as it now ſtands, and what is advanced on the ſame ſubject in this treatiſe.

It is alſo proper to give notice, that the edition of Mr. Hume's *Philoſophical Eſſays*, that I have quoted, is *the ſecond*, of 1751, 12mo; and that of his *Four Diſſertations*

is *the first* of 1757. My edition of the *Systeme de la Nature* is in two volumes, dated Londres, 1771. The first volume contains 397 pages, and the second 500.

LETTERS

LETTERS
TO A
PHILOSOPHICAL UNBELIEVER.

LETTER I.

Of the NATURE *of* EVIDENCE.

DEAR SIR,

I Am ſorry to find that, in conſequence of the books you have lately read, and of the company you have been obliged to keep, eſpecially on your travels, you have found your mind unhinged with reſpect to the firſt principles of religion, natural as well as revealed. You wiſh me to attempt the ſolution of the difficulties you have propoſed to me on thoſe ſubjects; and I ſhall, without much reluctance, undertake to give you all the ſatisfaction that I am able.

You

You have not, that I know, any vicious bias to miſlead you, by ſecretly inclining you to diſbelieve a ſyſtem which threatens vice with future puniſhment. And, though it is always flattering to a perſon of a ſpeculative turn to be ranked with thoſe whoſe mode of thinking is the moſt *faſhionable*, being connected with ideas of liberality, courage, manlineſs, freedom from vulgar prejudices, &c. yet as you have not particularly diſtinguiſhed yourſelf in this line, either by writing, taking the lead in converſation, or in any other way, I flatter myſelf that your bias of this kind (though it will draw you more ſtrongly than you can be aware of yourſelf) may not be too ſtrong for rational evidence, or ſuch as the nature of the thing admits of.

Otherwiſe, you are not ſo little read in the world, as not to have perceived, that there are many prejudices which no *evidence* can overcome. No perſon can poſſibly be ſenſible of this in himſelf, but we all ſee it in others; and we ſee that it extends to ſubjects

jects of all kinds, theology, metaphyſics, politics, and common life. Theſe prejudices ariſe from what are commonly called *falſe views of things*, or improper aſſociations of ideas, which in the extreme becomes *delirium*, or *madneſs*, and is conſpicuous to every perſon, except to him who actually labours under this diſorder of mind.

Now, as the cauſes of the wrong aſſociations of ideas affect men of letters as well as other perſons (though generally in a different way, and perhaps not, upon the whole, in the ſame degree) they may have the ſame bias to incredulity in ſome caſes, that others have to credulity; and the ſame perſon, who is the moſt unreaſonably incredulous in ſome things, may be as unreaſonably credulous, and even ſuperſtitious, in others; ſo little ought we to take it for granted, that a man who thinks rationally on ſome ſubjects will do ſo uniformly, and may be confided in as a ſafe guide in all. This, however, is agreeable to other analogies, as with reſpect to courage; for the extreme of bravery in ſome reſpects

reſpects is often found united with the extreme of cowardice in others.

You know a friend of ours, by no means deficient in point of general underſtanding, who to the faſhionable infidelity adds the faſhionable follies of the age. Though he believes nothing of *inviſible powers* of any kind, he has a predilection for a certain claſs of numbers in the lottery, and, when he is eagerly engaged in gaming, muſt throw his dice in particular, and what we think whimſical, circumſtances. Now, what is this better than *whiſtling for a wind* (which, however, we find many ſenſible ſailors continue to practice) the *Roman auguries*, or the weakeſt of the Popiſh ſuperſtitions?

The fact is, that in ſome manner, which perhaps neither himſelf nor any other perſon can explain, he has connected in his mind the idea of ſome peculiar circumſtances with that of a ſucceſsful throw, and the idea of other peculiar circumſtances with that of an unſucceſsful one, juſt as we happen to connect in our minds the ideas of *darkneſs* and of

apparitions; which aſſociation, when it is once formed, often affects the mind more or leſs through life, and long after all belief in apparitions is given up, and even ridiculed.

I might enforce this obſervation, which is far from being foreign to our preſent purpoſe, by reminding you, that there are both able and upright men on both ſides of what we think the cleareſt of all queſtions, in morals, theology, and politics. How often have you expreſſed your aſtoniſhment, that any perſon ſhould hold the doctrine that you reprobate concerning the *Middleſex election*, and the *taxation of America*, and yet think himſelf the friend of liberty, and the enemy of all oppreſſion and tyranny.

Had not mortality come in aid of the demonſtrations on which the Newtonian ſyſtem of the univerſe is founded, it is not certain that it would even yet have ſupplanted the Ariſtotelian, or Carteſian ſyſtem, ill-founded as they were. But the old and incorrigibly bigotted abettors of former hypotheſes leaving the ſtage, reaſon had a better chance with the younger, and the leſs biaſſed.

When

When you reflect on these, and many other facts of the same nature, you will not wonder much, that so many sensible men of your acquaintance, and men of an ingenuous and candid disposition in other respects, struck with the glaring absurdities and mischiefs of superstition, should think it wise and right to take refuge in irreligion; and, not seeing where they can consistently stop, even disclaim the belief of a God. Nor do I wonder that, being men of ingenuity, their reasonings on these subjects should have staggered you. All this may be the case, and yet those reasonings be altogether inconclusive.

As you profess you have no objection to my considering you as ignorant as I please in every thing relating to this subject, I shall, in order to lay the surest foundation of a truly rational faith, take the liberty to begin with explaining what appears to me to be the natural ground of *evidence*, or of the *assent* that we give to propositions of all kinds, that we may see afterwards how far it may be applied to the subject of religion.

Now

Now every *propoſition*, or every thing to which we give our aſſent, or diſſent, conſiſts ultimately of two terms, one of which is affirmed of the other; as that *twice two is four*, the *three angles of every right-lined triangle are equal to two right angles*; *man is mortal*, *air is elaſtic*, &c. And the ground of our affirming one of theſe ideas of the other is either that, when they are conſidered, they appear to be, in fact, the ſame idea, or perfectly to coincide; or elſe that the one is conſtantly obſerved to accompany the other. Thus the reaſon why I affirm that *twice two is four*, is, that the idea, annexed to the term *twice two*, coincides with the idea annexed to the term *four*; ſo does the idea of the quantity annexed to the *three angles of a right-lined triangle* with that of *two right angles*. But the reaſon why I affirm that *man is mortal* is of a different nature, and is founded on the obſervation that all men are found to be ſo; and I ſay that *air is elaſtic*, becauſe every ſubſtance that bears that denomination is found to reſtore itſelf to its former dimenſions, or nearly ſo, after having been compreſſed.

Propo-

Propoſitions of the former kind, if they be true at all, are univerſally and neceſſarily ſo, and the evidence for them is called *demonſtration*. Of this kind are the indiſputable propoſitions in geometry and algebra. But propoſitions of the latter kind are always liable to be corrected and modified by ſubſequent and more exact obſervations; becauſe it is not by comparing our own ideas only that we come to the knowledge of their truth, and later obſervations may correct what was defective in former ones.

There are, however, propoſitions of the former kind, the proof of which is not ſtrictly demonſtrative, becauſe the evidence of it does not ariſe from the compariſon of our ideas, but from the teſtimony of others, the validity of which reſts ultimately on the aſſociation of ideas; human teſtimony in certain circumſtances not having been found to deceive us. Of this kind is the propoſition *Alexander conquered Darius*. For the proof of it is complete, when it appears that the perſon, diſtinguiſhed by the name of Alexander, is the ſame with him that conquered

quered Darius. But ſince the evidence of this can never be made out by any operations on my own ideas, I have recourſe to the teſtimony of others; and I believe the propoſition to be true, becauſe I have all the reaſon I can have, to think that a hiſtory ſo authenticated as that of Alexander and Darius may be depended on.

Now it is not pretended, that the evidence of the propoſitions in natural or revealed religion is always of the former of theſe two kinds, but generally of the latter, or that which depends on the aſſociation of ideas; and in revealed religion, the evidence chiefly ariſes from teſtimony, but ſuch teſtimony as has never yet been found to deceive us. I do not therefore ſay, that I can properly *demonſtrate* all the principles of either; but I preſume that, if any perſon's mind be truly unprejudiced, I ſhall be able to lay before him ſuch evidence of both, as will determine his aſſent; and, in ſome of the caſes, his *perſuaſion* ſhall hardly be diſtinguiſhable, with reſpect to its *ſtrength*, from that which ariſes

from a demonſtration properly ſo called, the difference being, as mathematicians ſay, leſs than any aſſignable quantity. For no perſon, I preſume, has, in fact, any more doubt either of there having been ſuch a perſon as Alexander, or of his having conquered Darius, than he has of any propoſition whatever. And yet ſufficient and plenary as this evidence appears to me, it may fall far ſhort of producing conviction in the minds of all; for, in ſome caſes, we have ſeen that demonſtration itſelf will not do this.

I am,

Dear Sir,

Your's, &c.

LETTER II.

Of the direct Evidence for the Belief of a God.

DEAR SIR,

HAVING premiſed the obſervations contained in the preceding letter on the nature of evidence, I proceed to obſerve, that no perſon can live long in the world without knowing that men make *chairs* and *tables*, build *houſes*, and write *books*, and that chairs, tables, houſes, or books, are not made without men. This conſtant and indiſputable obſervation lays the foundation for ſuch an aſſociation of the ideas of chairs, tables, houſes, and books, with that of *men* as the makers of them, that whenever we ſee a chair, a table, a houſe, or a book, we entertain no doubt but, though we did not ſee *when* or *how* they were made, and nobody gives us any information on the ſubject, yet that ſome man or other *did* make them. No

man can ever ſuppoſe that a chair, a table, a houſe, or a book, was either the production of any tree, or came into being of itſelf. Nothing, in the courſe of his own experience, or that of others, can lead him to imagine any ſuch thing.

He afterwards ſees birds build neſts, ſpiders make webs, bees make honeycombs, &c. and accordingly he, as before, aſſociates in his mind the ideas of all theſe things with that of the animals that made them; and therefore he concludes, when he ſees a *honeycomb*, for inſtance, that *bees* have been at work upon it.

Finding, however, that ſome animals can, to a certain degree, imitate the works of others, and man thoſe of moſt of them, he ſees reaſon to limit his former concluſion, that ſuch a particular animal, and no other, muſt neceſſarily have produced them, but (generalizing his ideas, from obſerving ſomething of the ſame nature in whatever can produce the ſame thing, and calling it *ſimilar power*) he ſays, that ſome being of *ſufficient powers* has produced it.

Advancing, as he neceſſarily muſt, in the habit of generalizing his ideas, he calls chairs, tables, neſts, webs, &c. by the general term *effects*, and men, animals, &c. that produce them, by the term *cauſes*; and expreſſing the reſult of all his obſervations, he concludes univerſally, that *all effects have their adequate cauſes*. For he ſees nothing come into being in any other way.

He likewiſe ſees one plant proceed from another, and one animal from another, by natural vegetation, or generation, and therefore he concludes that every plant and every animal had its proper parents. But the parent plant, or parent animal, does not bear the ſame relation to its offspring that men do to chairs, books, &c. becauſe they have no *deſign* in producing them, and no *comprehenſion* of the nature or uſe of what they produce. There is, however, ſome analogy in the two caſes; and therefore the parent plant, or parent animal, is ſtill termed a *cauſe*, though in a leſs proper ſenſe of the word. However, admitting theſe to be called cauſes, it is ſtill univerſally true, that

nothing begins to exiſt without a cauſe. To this rule we ſee no exception whatever, and therefore cannot poſſibly entertain a doubt with reſpect to it.

Again, wherever there are *proper cauſes*, as of *men* with reſpect to *chairs*, *books*, &c. we cannot but be ſenſible that theſe cauſes muſt be capable of comprehending the nature and uſes of thoſe productions of which they are the cauſes, and *ſo far* as they are the cauſes of them. A carpenter may know nothing of the texture of the wood on which he works, or the cauſe of its colour, &c. for with reſpect to *them* he is no cauſe; but being the proper cauſe of the converſion of the wood into a chair, or table, he (or the perſon who employed him, or who firſt conſtructed theſe things, &c.) muſt have had an adequate idea of their nature and uſes.

Obſervations of this kind extending themſelves every day, it neceſſarily becomes a maxim with us, that wherever there is a fitneſs or correſpondence of one thing to another, there muſt have been a cauſe capable of comprehending, and of deſigning that

fitneſs. The firſt model of a windmill could not have been made by an ideot. Of ſuch concluſions as theſe we have ſo full a perſuaſion, from conſtant experience and obſervation, that no man, let him pretend what he will, can entertain a ſerious doubt about the matter. The experience and obſervations of all men, without exception, are ſo much alike, that ſuch aſſociations of ideas as theſe muſt neceſſarily have been formed in all their minds, ſo that there is no poſſible cauſe of any difference of opinion on the ſubject.

Thus far we ſeem to tread upon firm ground, and every human being, I doubt not, will go along with me. And if they go thus far, I do not ſee how they can help going one ſtep farther, and acknowledge, that if a *table* or a *chair* muſt have had a deſigning cauſe, capable of comprehending their nature and uſes, the *wood*, or the *tree*, of which the table was made, and alſo the *man* that conſtructed it, muſt likewiſe have had a deſigning cauſe, and a cauſe, or author, capable of comprehending all the

powers and properties of which they are poſſeſſed, and therefore of an underſtanding greatly ſuperior to that of any man, who is very far, indeed, from comprehending his own frame; being obliged to ſtudy it, and make diſcoveries concerning it by degrees, as he does with reſpect to other things moſt foreign to himſelf, in the general ſyſtem of nature. And of the nature of the immediate *perceptive power* itſelf, it is no more poſſible that he ſhould have any idea, than that an eye ſhould ſee itſelf.

This reaſoning, wherever it may lead us, I do not ſee how we can poſſibly refuſe to follow, becauſe it is exactly the ſame that we ſet out with, ariſing from our own *immediate experience*. No perſon will ſay that one table might make another, or that one man might make another. Nothing that man does approaches to it. And if no man now living could do this, neither could any man's father, or moſt remote anceſtor; becauſe we ſee no ſuch difference in any beings of the ſame ſpecies. Though, therefore, it ſhould even be allowed, that *the ſpecies* had no beginning,

ginning, it would not follow that it could be *the cauſe of itſelf*, or that it had *no cauſe*; for the idea of a cauſe of any thing implies not only ſomething prior to itſelf, or at leaſt cotemporary with itſelf, but ſomething capable at leaſt of comprehending what it produces; and our going back ever ſo far in the generations of men or animals brings us no nearer to the leaſt degree of ſatisfaction on the ſubject. After thinking in this train ever ſo long, we find we might juſt as well ſuppoſe that any individual man now living was the firſt, and without cauſe, as either any of his anceſtors, or *the ſpecies itſelf*. For that there is ſuch a contrivance in the ſtructure of a man's body, and eſpecially ſomething ſo wonderful in the faculties of his mind, as exceeds the comprehenſion of *man*, cannot be denied.

For the ſame reaſon that the human ſpecies muſt have had a deſigning cauſe, all the ſpecies of brute animals, and the *world* to which they belong, and with which they make but *one ſyſtem*, and indeed all the *viſible univerſe*

univerſe (which, as far as we can judge, bears all the marks of being *one work*) muſt have had a cauſe, or author, poſſeſſed of what we may juſtly call *infinite power and intelligence.* For, in our endeavours to form an idea of ſomething actually infinite, we ſhall fall greatly ſhort of an idea of ſuch intelligence as muſt belong to the author of the ſyſtem.

It follows, therefore, from the moſt irreſiſtible evidence, that the world muſt have had a deſigning cauſe, diſtinct from, and ſuperior to itſelf. This concluſion follows from the ſtrongeſt analogies poſſible. It reſts on our own conſtant experience; and we may juſt as well ſay, that a *table* had not a deſigning cauſe, or no cauſe diſtinct from itſelf, as that the *world*, or the *univerſe*, conſidered as one ſyſtem, had none. This neceſſary cauſe we call *God*, whatever other attributes he be poſſeſſed of.

Whatever difficulties we may meet with as we proceed, *ſo far* we muſt go, if we advance even the firſt ſtep; and not to admit the firſt ſtep, that is, not to admit that ſuch a thing

a thing as a *table* had a prior and ſuperior cauſe, would be univerſally judged to proceed from ſome very uncommon diſorder in the mental faculties, and to be incompatible with a ſound ſtate of mind.

I ſhall, in my next, proceed to conſider the difficulties that have been ſtarted on this ſubject by metaphyſical writers; and whether I be able to do it to your ſatisfaction or not, I will, at leaſt, do it with all poſſible fairneſs. In the mean time,

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED.

DEAR SIR,

HITHERTO we have met with nothing that deſerves to be called *a difficulty* in the proof of the being of a God; and if nothing more could be advanced on the ſubject, it

it would, I think, juſtify us in refuſing to attend to any thing that could be ſaid by way of *objection*; becauſe ſo far we have what is fully equivalent to a *demonſtration* of the exiſtence of a primary intelligent cauſe. I ſhall now, however, proceed to the conſideration of the principal difficulties that have been ſtarted on the ſubject.

The firſt in importance is, that, for the ſame reaſon that the univerſe requires an intelligent cauſe, that intelligent cauſe muſt require a ſuperior intelligent cauſe, and ſo on *ad infinitum*, which is manifeſtly abſurd. We may juſt as well, therefore, it is alledged, acquieſce in ſaying, in the firſt inſtance, that the univerſe had no cauſe, as proceed to ſay that the cauſe of the univerſe had none.

I anſwer, that to acquieſce in ſaying that the univerſe had no cauſe is, for the reaſons that have been given already, abſolutely *impoſſible*, whatever be the conſequence. If, therefore, there be ever ſo little leſs difficulty on the other ſide of the dilemma, viz. that the cauſe of the univerſe had no cauſe, it is to that that we muſt incline.

Let

Let us ſee then whether there be any other ſuppoſition, which, though it be a *difficulty*, or *incomprehenſible* by us, does not directly contradict our experience, or whether by ſome independent argument it may not be proved, that, incomprehenſible as it is, there *muſt* have been an *uncauſed intelligent being*.

Both theſe things have, in fact, been done before; but I ſhall here repeat them with illuſtrations, adapted to this particular difficulty; and, in order to this, I ſhall reſume the argument in the following different manner.

Something muſt have exiſted from all eternity, for otherwiſe nothing could have exiſted at preſent. This is too evident to need illuſtration. But this *original Being*, as we may call it, could not have been ſuch a thing as a table, an animal, or a man, or any Being *incapable of comprehending itſelf*, for ſuch a one would require a prior, or ſuperior author. The original Being, therefore, muſt have had this prerogative, as well as have been neceſſarily *uncauſed*.

It is not improper to call a Being incapable of comprehending itſelf *finite*, and a Being originally and neceſſarily capable of it *infinite*; for we can have no idea of any bounds to ſuch knowledge or power; and, uſing the words in this ſenſe, we may, perhaps, be authoriſed to ſay; that, though a finite Being muſt have a cauſe, an infinite one does not require it. Though it is acknowledged that theſe concluſions are above our comprehenſion, they are ſuch as, by the plaineſt and the moſt cogent train of reaſoning, we have been *compelled* into; and therefore, though, on account of the finiteneſs of our underſtanding, it may be ſaid to be *above* our reaſon, to comprehend *how* this original Being, and the cauſe of all other Beings, ſhould be himſelf uncauſed, it is a concluſion by no means properly *contrary* to reaſon. Indeed, what the univerſally eſtabliſhed mode of reaſoning, founded on our own immediate experience, obliges us to conclude, can never be ſaid to be contrary to reaſon, how *incomprehenſible* ſo ever it may be by our reaſon.

That

That there actually is an *uncauſed intelligent Being* is a neceſſary concluſion from what does actually exiſt; for a ſeries of finite cauſes cannot poſſibly be carried back *ad infinitum*, each being ſuppoſed capable of comprehending its own effects, but not itſelf. Since, therefore, an univerſe, bearing innumerable marks of moſt exquiſite deſign, *does exiſt*, and it would be abſurd to go back through an infinite ſucceſſion of finite cauſes, we *muſt* at laſt acquieſce in the idea of an uncauſed intelligent cauſe of this univerſe, and of all the intermediate finite cauſes, be they ever ſo many.

On this ſide there is only a *difficulty of conceiving*, but nothing *contrary to our experience*, and there is plainly no other choice left us. Our experience relates only to ſuch things as are incapable of comprehending themſelves, or finite, and therefore require a cauſe. Conſequently, though this experience furniſhes a ſufficient analogy for judging concerning all other things which have the *ſame property*, it by no means furniſhes any analogy by which to judge concerning what is totally

totally different from any thing to which our experience extends; things not finite, but infinite, not deſtitute of original ſelf-comprehenſion, but poſſeſſed of it. Here is ſo great a difference, that as the one muſt neceſſarily be *cauſed*, the other may be neceſſarily *uncauſed*.

Though nothing can properly help our conception in a caſe ſo much above the reach of our faculties, it may not be amiſs to have recourſe to any thing in the leaſt degree ſimilar, though equally incomprehenſible, as it may make it eaſier to us to acquieſce in our neceſſary want of comprehenſion on the ſubject. Now, in ſome reſpects, the idea of *ſpace*, though not intelligent, and therefore incapable of ſelf comprehenſion, and no cauſe of any thing, is ſimilar to that of the intelligent cauſe of all things, in that it is neceſſarily *infinite*, and *uncauſed*. For the ideas of the creation, or of the annihilation of ſpace, are equally inadmiſſible. Though we may in our imagination, exclude from exiſtence every thing elſe, ſtill the idea of *ſpace* will remain. We cannot, even in idea, ſuppoſe

it

it not to *have been*, not to be *infinite*, or not to be *uncaused*. Now it may be, in fact, as impoſſible that an *intelligent infinite Being* ſhould not exiſt, as that *infinite ſpace* ſhould not exiſt, though we are neceſſarily incapable of perceiving that it *muſt* be ſo.

If it be ſaid that ſpace is properly nothing at all, I anſwer, that ſpace has real properties, as cannot be denied, and I know of no other definition of a *ſubſtance*, than that which has properties. Take away all the properties of *any thing*, and nothing will be left; juſt ſo alſo, and no otherwiſe, nothing will be left of *ſpace* when the properties of length, breadth, and depth, are ſuppoſed to be taken away.

Secondly, it may be ſaid, that *a whole* may have properties which the parts have not, as a ſound may proceed from the vibration of a ſtring, the component particles of which could not produce any, or as the faculty of thinking may be the reſult of a certain arrangement of the parts of the brain, which ſeparately have no thought.

I anſwer, that it cannot but be that every *whole* muſt have ſome properties which do not belong to the *ſeparate parts*, but ſtill, if all the ſeparate parts require a cauſe, the whole muſt; and whatever peculiar powers belong to a whole, as ſuch, they muſt be ſuch as neceſſarily reſult from the arrangement of the parts, and the combination of their powers. But no combination or arrangement whatever of *cauſed Beings* can conſtitute an *uncauſed* one. This affects us like a manifeſt contradiction.

To ſay, that the whole univerſe may have had no cauſe, when it is acknowledged that each of its parts, ſeparately taken, muſt have had one, would be the ſame thing as ſaying that *a houſe* may have had no maker, though the walls, the roof, the windows, the doors, and all the parts of which it conſiſts, muſt have had one. Such a concluſion, with reſpect to a houſe, or the univerſe, would equally contradict our *conſtant experience*, and what we may call our *common ſenſe*.

With reſpect to *thinking*, we only do not ſee *how* it reſults from the arrangement of

matter, when facts prove that it *does* reſult from it, the properties of *thinking* and *materiality* being only *different*, not *contrary*; whereas *cauſed* and *uncauſed* are the direct reverſe of each other.

Suppoſing, however, that intelligence *could* reſult from the preſent arrangement of ſuch bodies as the ſun, the earth, and the other planets, &c. (which, however, is ſo unlike the uniform compoſition of a *brain*, that the argument from analogy entirely fails) ſo that all that is *intellectual* in the univerſe, ſhould be the neceſſary reſult of what is not intellectual in it, and, conſequently, there ſhould be what has ſometimes been called *a ſoul of the univerſe*, the hypotheſis is, in fact, that of a Deity, though we ourſelves ſhould enter into the compoſition of it, and there would be a real foundation for religion. But our imagination revolts at the idea, and we are compelled, as the eaſieſt ſolution of the phenomena, to acquieſce in the belief of an intelligent uncauſed being, entirely diſtinct from the univerſe of which he is the author.

Thirdly, it will be ſaid, that, as all the intelligence that we are acquainted with reſides in the brains of men and animals, the Deity, if he be a Being diſtinct from the univerſe, and intelligent, muſt, whatever be his form, have in him ſomething reſembling the ſtructure of the brain.

I anſwer, that the preceding train of reaſoning proves the contrary. An uncauſed intelligent author of nature, and one that is diſtinct from it, there muſt be. This Being, however, is not the object of our ſenſes. Therefore the ſeat of intelligence, though it be ſomething viſible and tangible in us, is not *neceſſarily* and *univerſally* ſo.

Beſides, it only follows from the Deity and the human brain being both intelligent, that they muſt have this in common, and ſomething (if any ſuch thing there be) on which that property depends; but this may not be any thing neceſſarily connected with what is viſible or tangible, or the object of any of our ſenſes. Many things have common properties that are very diſſimilar in other reſpects. If we had known nothing

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elaſtic beſides *ſteel*, we might have concluded that nothing was elaſtic but ſteel, or ſomething equally ſolid and hard; and yet we find elaſticity belong to ſo rare a ſubſtance as *air*, and altogether unlike ſteel in every other reſpect. The divine mind, therefore, may be intelligent, in common with the mind of man, and yet not have the viſible and tangible properties, or any thing of the *conſiſtence* of the brain.

There are many *powers* in nature, even thoſe by which bodies are acted upon, where nothing is viſible; as the power of *gravitation*, and of *repulſion* at a diſtance from the viſible ſurfaces of bodies. There are even ſuch powers in places occupied by other bodies. Both gravitation and magnetiſm act through ſubſtances interpoſed between the bodies poſſeſſed of them and thoſe on which they act. The divine power, therefore, may penetrate, and fill all ſpace, occupied or unoccupied by other ſubſtances, and yet be itſelf the object of none of our ſenſes. And what do we mean by *ſubſtance*, but that in which we ſuppoſe powers to reſide; ſo that wherever

powers can exiſt, what we call the *ſubſtance* cannot be excluded, unleſs we ſuppoſe Beings to act where they are not.

Fourthly, it was ſaid by the atheiſts among the antients, that the univerſe might have been formed by the *fortuitous concourſe of atoms*, which had been in motion from all eternity, and therefore muſt, they ſay, have been in all poſſible ſituations.

But, beſides many other improbabilities, which may make it doubtful whether any perſon was ever really ſatisfied with the hypotheſis, thoſe who advanced it were not philoſophers enough to know what *atoms* are. If we have any ideas to words, atoms muſt mean *ſolid particles of matter*, that is, maſſes of matter; which, however ſmall, are perfectly *compact*, and therefore conſiſt of parts that have ſtrong powers of *attraction*. But what reaſon have we, from experience, to ſuppoſe it poſſible, that theſe ſmall maſſes of matter could have theſe powers without communication *ab extra*?

In what reſpects could thoſe atoms differ from pieces of wood, ſtone, or metal, at preſent;

ſent; and is a piece of wood, ſtone, or metal, capable even of comprehending, much leſs of communicating its own powers, any more than a magnet? As well, therefore, might a magnet have been originally exiſtent, as any coherent atom, or an atom poſſeſſed of the moſt ſimple powers whatever. In fact, we may juſt as well ſuppoſe a *man* to have been that originally exiſtent being, as either of them.

Beſides, admitting the exiſtence of theſe original atoms, can we ſuppoſe them to have been moved any otherwiſe than as ſuch bodies are moved at preſent, that is, by an external force. It is directly repugnant to all our experience to ſuppoſe any ſuch thing, and could they be arranged in a manner expreſſive of the moſt exquiſite deſign, without a mover poſſeſſed of competent intelligence?

Thus far, I flatter myſelf, I have advanced on ſufficiently ſolid ground, in proving that there muſt have been an originally intelligent cauſe of the univerſe, diſtinct from the univerſe itſelf; or that *there is a God*. In proceeding farther I cannot promiſe to be always quite ſo clear, but I will promiſe to

be *ingenuous*, purſuing ſuch analogies as I am able to find, and no farther than they will naturally lead me.

Whether what I have already advanced will appear as ſatisfactory to you as it does to me, I cannot tell. If your mind be as unbiaſſed, as I am willing to hope it is, I think it muſt make ſome impreſſion; for there is a ſtrong natural evidence in favour of the belief of a God, and only ſomething *incomprehenſible* to us, but by no means contrary to evidence, or reaſon, againſt it. And there is ſomething ſo pleaſing in the idea of a ſupreme *author*, and conſequently, as I ſhall ſhow, of a ſupreme *governor* of the world, to virtuous and ingenuous minds, infinitely preferable to the idea of *a blind fate*, and a *fatherleſs deſerted world*, that if the mind was only *in equilibrio* with reſpect to the argument, it would, in fact, be determined by this bias. A truly ingenuous mind, therefore, will not only decide in favour of the belief of a God, but will ſo decide with joy.

I am, &c.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

Of the neceſſary Attributes of the original Cauſe of all Things.

DEAR SIR,

IN the preceding Letters I hope I have removed your greateſt difficulties with reſpect to the belief of an *original intelligent cauſe of the univerſe*; having proved that, how incomprehenſible ſoever ſuch a Being may be to us, yet that ſuch a Being muſt neceſſarily exiſt. My argument in ſhort was this. There are in the univerſe innumerable and moſt evident marks of *deſign*, and it is directly contrary to all our obſervation and experience, to ſuppoſe that it ſhould have come into being without a cauſe adequate to it, with reſpect both to power and intelligence. A Being, therefore, poſſeſſed of ſuch power and intelligence *muſt* exiſt. If this Being, the immediate maker

of

of the univerſe, has not exiſted from all eternity, he muſt have derived his being and powers from one who has; and this *originally exiſtent and intelligent Being*, which the actual exiſtence of the univerſe compels us to come to at laſt, is the Being that we call *God*.

It is of no avail to ſay, that we have no *conception* concerning the original exiſtence of ſuch a Being, for our having *no idea at all* of any thing implies no impoſſibility, or contradiction whatever. This is mere *ignorance*, and an ignorance which, circumſtanced as we are, we can never overcome; and the *actual phenomena* cannot be accounted for without the ſuppoſition of ſuch a Being. Incomprehenſible as it may be, in ever ſo many reſpects, it is an hypotheſis that is abſolutely neceſſary to account for evident *facts*. We may, therefore, give what ſcope we will to our aſtoniſhment, and admiration, yet *believe* (if we be guided by demonſtrative evidence) we *muſt*. And it is a belief mixed with joy as well as with wonder. Let us now conſider what may be either neceſſarily inferred,

or

or is with the greateſt probability implied, in the idea of this *original cauſe of all things.*

The firſt obſervation I would make is, that this Being muſt be what we term *infinite*; that is, ſince he is intelligent, there can be no bounds to his intelligence, or he muſt know all that is capable of being known; and ſince he is powerful (his works correſponding to what we call effects of power) his power muſt be infinite, or capable of producing whatever is poſſible in itſelf.

Since the reaſon why we cannot help concluding that a man, or any other Being that we are acquainted with, could not be this originally exiſtent Being, is the *limitation* of his knowledge and power (not being capable even of comprehending any thing equal to himſelf) and ſince this muſt have been the caſe with reſpect to any other Being, how great ſo ever, who had not this ſelf-comprehenſion, the originally exiſting Being muſt neceſſarily have this power. A Being perfectly comprehending himſelf and every thing elſe cannot have knowledge leſs than what may, in one ſenſe at leaſt, be termed

infinite,

infinite, for it comprehends *every thing* that exiſts. Admitting this, we cannot ſuppoſe that it does not likewiſe extend to every thing that *neceſſarily follows* from all that actually exiſts; and after this, we ſhall not know how to ſuppoſe that he ſhould not be able to know what would be the reſult of any *poſſible* exiſtence, for we cannot think this to be more difficult than the former.

Beſides, in purſuance, in ſome meaſure, of this argument, we cannot help concluding, that a power capable of producing all that actually exiſts (ſo immenſe and wonderful, is what is known of the ſyſtem of the univerſe) muſt be equal to any effect that is *poſſible in itſelf*. At leaſt, if this inference be not ſtrictly *neceſſary*, yet, having been compelled to admit the exiſtence of a power ſo far exceeding all that we can comprehend, and all that we can imagine, when we even ſtrain our conceptions to form an idea of infinite, we can ſee no reaſon why it ſhould not be actually and ſtrictly ſo.

Nay, having arrived at the knowledge of a Being who muſt have the power of ſelf-

comprehenſion, and alſo that of producing all that exiſts, we ſeem to require ſome external poſitive *cauſe of limitation* to his knowledge and power; which external poſitive cauſe we look for in vain. We therefore cannot feel the leaſt reluctance in acquieſcing in the belief that the original author of all things is infinite in knowledge and power. Having proved him to be capable of knowing and doing *ſo much*, we ſhould, from a natural analogy, even revolt at the idea of his not being able to know and to do even *more*, if more were poſſible. This perſuaſion we arrive at by purſuing the moſt natural train of reaſoning, and the moſt obvious deductions from the premiſes before us; ſo that any other inferences would be *unnatural*. We need not ſcruple, therefore, to conſider it as an undoubted truth, however exceeding our comprehenſion, and therefore our power of *proper demonſtration*, that God, the originally exiſting Being, or the firſt cauſe of all things, is a Being of ſtrictly infinite power and knowledge.

Secondly,

Secondly, he must be *omnipresent*, or occupy all space, though this attribute is equally incomprehensible by us with the infinite extent of his power or knowledge.

That God must be present to all his works is a necessary conclusion; while we all admit that no power can act but where it is. Besides, existing, as he does, without any foreign cause, by what we call (though inaccurately, as all our language on this subject must be) *a natural necessity*, there can be no reason why he should exist in one place and not in another. He must, therefore, exist equally in all places, even through the boundless extent of infinite space, an idea just as incomprehensible, as his necessary existence, but not more so. After this, the probability will be, that his *works*, as well as *himself*, occupy the whole extent of space, infinite as it must necessarily be, and that as *he* could have had no beginning, so neither had *his works*.

Having been obliged to admit so much that is altogether incomprehensible by us, it is by an easy chain of consequences that we come

come to these farther conclusions, which are not more incomprehensible than the former. Nay, if the universe had bounds, we should, if we reflect on the subject, be apt to wonder at those bounds, as much as we should wonder at any limitation to the knowledge of a Being who has the inconceivable power of self-comprehension, or at the limitation of his power, who has produced the universe.

Again, that a Being, infinitely intelligent and infinitely powerful, should remain inactive a whole eternity, which must have been the case if the creation had any beginning at all, is also an idea that we can never reconcile ourselves to. An eternal creation, being the act of an eternal Being, is not at all more incomprehensible than the eternal existence of that Being himself. Both are incomprehensible, but the one is the most natural consequence of the other. In fact, there is no greater objection to the supposition of the *creation* having been eternal, than to *duration itself* having been eternal; for there cannot be any assignable or imaginable

ginable period in duration, in which the creation might not have taken place *.

Thirdly, that this infinite Being, who has exiſted without change, muſt continue to exiſt without change to eternity, is likewiſe a concluſion that we cannot help drawing, though, the ſubject being incomprehenſible, we may not be able to complete the demonſtration. It is, however, little, if at all, ſhort of the force of a demonſtration, that the ſame *natural neceſſity* by which he always has exiſted, muſt, of courſe, prevent any change whatever. Beſides, if any cauſe of change had exiſted, it muſt have operated in a whole eternity that is already paſt. We ſhould alſo naturally conclude that, as no Being could *make* himſelf (ſince that would imply that he exiſted, and did not exiſt, at the ſame time) ſo neither can any being *unmake*, or materially change, at leaſt not *annihilate* himſelf; and, being omnipotent, no

* This opinion of the infinity and eternity of the works of an infinite and eternal deity, though it ſeems to me to be the moſt probable, is by no means a neceſſary part of the ſyſtem of natural religion. The belief of the exiſtence of a God, and of a providence, may very well be held without it.

other

other Being, eſpecially none that he himſelf has produced (and in reality there cannot be any other) can be ſuppoſed capable of producing any change in him. Whatever, therefore, the ſupreme Being is, and always has been, he ever muſt be.

Fourthly. There cannot be more than *one* ſuch Being as this. Though this propoſition may not be ſtrictly demonſtrable by us, it is a ſuppoſition more natural than any other, and it perfectly harmonizes with what has been ſtrictly proved, and deduced already. Nay, there ſeems to be ſomething hardly diſtinguiſhable from a contradiction in the ſuppoſition of there being *two infinite Beings of the ſame kind*, ſince, in idea, they would perfectly *coincide*. We clearly perceive that there cannot be two *infinite ſpaces*, and ſince the analogy between this infinite unintelligent Being, as we may call it, and the infinite intelligent one, has been ſeen to be pretty remarkable in one inſtance, it may be equally ſtrict here; ſo that, were our faculties equal to the ſubject, and had we proper *data*, I think we ſhould expect to

perceive, that there could no more be two infinite intelligent and omnipreſent Beings, than there can be two infinite ſpaces.

Indeed, their being *numerically two* would, in ſome meaſure, limit one another, ſo that, by the reaſoning we have hitherto followed, neither of them could be the originally exiſtent Being. Suppoſing them to be equally omnipotent, and that one of them ſhould intend to do, and the other to undo, the ſame thing, their power would be equally balanced; and if their intentions always coincided, and they equally filled all ſpace, they would be as much, and to all intents and purpoſes, *one and the ſame Being*, as the coincidence of two infinite ſpaces would make but one infinite ſpace.

I appeal to yourſelf, whether, after having admitted what the *actual phenomena* of nature compel us to admit, we could, without a real difficulty, and a manifeſt incongruity in our mode of reaſoning, ſtop in any part of the progreſs through which I have now led you, whether every ſucceeding ſtep has been a ſtrictly neceſſary conſequence of the preceding,

preceding, or not. Nay, the inferences have been ſo natural, that we cannot help ſuſpecting that it is owing to the imperfection of our faculties, and our neceſſarily imperfect knowledge of the ſubject, that we do not *ſee* the inferences to be perfectly ſtrict and concluſive.

We can hardly doubt but that a Being of infinite knowledge muſt clearly comprehend them all; that ſuch a Being muſt be able to perceive both that, independently of every thing elſe actually exiſting, *he himſelf* could not but have exiſted, that he could not but have had *infinite knowledge and power*, that he could not have been excluded from any part of even infinite ſpace, that he could not but have acted from all eternity, that he could not be ſubject to any change, and that there could not be any other Being equal or comparable to himſelf, or that ſhould not be dependent upon himſelf. We do not ſee the neceſſary connexion of all theſe properties, and therefore we cannot ſee *how* any other Being can; but the caſe is ſuch,

that we cannot help ſuſpecting that it is owing to our imperfection that we are not able to do it.

If you ſay that I have bewildered and confounded you with theſe ſpeculations, you muſt, however, acknowledge, that it has been in conſequence of following the beſt lights the ſubject could afford us; and that to have come to any other concluſions we muſt, in all caſes, have taken a leſs probability inſtead of a greater, and ſomething leſs inſtead of ſomething more, conſonant to what we were, from the firſt, compelled by the plaineſt phenomena to admit.

You will pleaſe, however, to obſerve that, in all this, I do not pretend to prove *a priori* that, without any regard to the ſuppoſition of an external world, there muſt have been what may be called a *ſelf-exiſtent Being*; but only that, having firſt proved, from the phenomena of nature, that there muſt have been an eternally exiſting intelligent Being, we cannot help concluding (at leaſt according to the ſtrongeſt probabilities) that, in

conſequence of being *originally exiſting*, and the intelligent cauſe of all things, he muſt be infinitely knowing and powerful, fill infinite ſpace, and have no equal.

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

The Evidence for the GENERAL BENEVOLENCE *of the Deity.*

DEAR SIR,

I Flatter myſelf that, in the preceding Letters, I have removed, or at leaſt have leſſened, your difficulties relating to the arguments for the being and primary attributes of the Deity. It is true that I have led you into the region of *infinites* and *incomprehenſibles*; but then *reaſon* herſelf conducted us thither, and we did not loſe ſight of her while we were there. Among infi-

nites there are analogies peculiar to themſelves, and thoſe who cannot form an adequate idea of any thing infinite, may yet judge of thoſe *analogies*, as well as of thoſe of finites. Infinites frequently occur in geometrical and algebraical inveſtigations, and yet the moſt clear and undeniable conſequences may be drawn from them.

The phenomena of nature prove that there muſt have been ſome *originally exiſtent Being*, and of ſuch a nature, that it could not derive its exiſtence and powers from any thing prior to it. Conſequently, it could not be any thing of a finite nature, ſuch as plants, or animals, or any thing that we ſee here; for theſe, not being able even to comprehend their own conſtitution, muſt neceſſarily have derived it from ſome Being of ſuperior knowledge and power; and the idea of the degree of knowledge and power requiſite to form ſuch a ſyſtem as this, of which we are a part, cannot be diſtinguiſhed from that of *infinite*. Indeed, had it been, in any reſpect, finite, it would only have been in the condition of a plant, or an animal, of a more perfect

perfect kind, and therefore, like them, would have required a ſuperior cauſe. The evident probability therefore is, that the original intelligent cauſe of all things, and who muſt neceſſarily have been *uncauſed*, is, in the ſtricteſt ſenſe of the word, *infinite* in knowledge and power; as, for reaſons that have been given, he muſt likewiſe be infinite in duration, and extenſion, or commenſurate with all time, and all ſpace. And though we are utterly at a loſs to conceive *how* ſo great a Being as this ſhould himſelf require no cauſe, it is even demonſtrable both that ſuch a Being *doth* exiſt, and that he *could not* have any cauſe, and therefore, we *muſt* acquieſce in our inability of having any ideas on the ſubject.

This caſe is, however, evidently different from that of all finite Beings, all of which neceſſarily require a cauſe; and, though we cannot conceive it, the reaſon why this great Being requires none, may be *his being infinite*; juſt as ſpace muſt neceſſarily have exiſted, and have been infinite, and without any cauſe whatever. A difficulty in con-

ceiving *how* a thing can be is no proof of its impoſſibility; and indeed there cannot be a clearer inſtance of it than the preſent. For nothing can be more evident than that ſuch Beings as plants and animals muſt have had a ſuperior cauſe; nothing alſo can be more evident than that they could not have proceeded from each other by ſucceſſion from all eternity; and therefore nothing can be more evident, than that the primary cauſe of all theſe things muſt himſelf have exiſted from all eternity, without any thing prior, or ſuperior to him, notwithſtanding our utter inability to conceive *how* all this ſhould be.

Since it is evident, from the innumerable marks of deſign through the whole ſyſtem of nature, that the author of it is intelligent, and, conſequently, had ſome *end* in view in what he did, let us, in the next place, inquire what this end probably was; and I flatter myſelf that, inſtead of meeting with more difficulties in this part of our inquiry, as has often been repreſented, we ſhall, in reality, meet with fewer than we have had before;

before; and here analogy, founded on eſtabliſhed aſſociations of ideas, is our only guide.

Means and *ends* are perpetually occurring to our obſervation. Hence no habit is more fixed than that of diſtinguiſhing them, and of perceiving the relation they bear to each other. We hardly ever ſee the hand of man without perceiving marks of deſign, and they are not leſs evident in the works of God. That the *eye* was made for ſeeing, that is, perceiving the form and colour of remote objects, and the *ear* for hearing, or perceiving the ſounds made by them, is no leſs evident than that the *pen* and the *ink* with which I write were made and provided for the purpoſe of writing.

We are likewiſe juſt as able, in many caſes, to diſtinguiſh a *perfection* from a *defect* in the works of *nature*, as in thoſe of *art*. For the analogy is ſo great, that we cannot help applying theſe terms to them, and reaſoning in the ſame manner concerning them. If I go into a mill, and ſee every wheel in motion, and going with as little friction and noiſe as poſſible,

poſſible, I conclude that every thing is as the maker intended it, and that the machine is complete in its kind, anſwering the end for which it was made. But if I ſee a pinion break, and the motion of the machine in part obſtructed by it, I immediately conclude that this was not intended by the maker, ſince it muſt contribute to unfit the machine for its proper functions.

In like manner, judging of the works of God as I do concerning thoſe of man, when I ſee a plant in its vigour, and an animal of its proper ſize and form, healthy, and ſtrong, I conclude that theſe are as they were intended to be, and that they are fitted to anſwer the end of their creation, whatever that was. Theſe, therefore, I attend to, and not to trees that are blighted, or animals that are maimed and diſeaſed, when I wiſh to form a right judgment of the deſign of their maker. And indeed, we do ſee that, in general, plants and animals are, to a conſiderable degree, healthy, and that the ſickly and diſeaſed among them, are exceptions to the general obſervation.

Now,

Now, what is health, but a ſtate of *enjoyment* in beings capable of it, and what is *diſeaſe*, but a diminution of enjoyment, if not a ſtate of actual *pain*. Since, then, the obvious deſign of the animal economy was *health*, and not *ſickneſs*, is it not evident that the intention of their maker muſt have been their *happineſs*, not their *miſery*? I do not know any concluſion more obvious, or more ſatisfactory than this. What the ſupreme Author of all things may *farther intend* by the happineſs of his creatures, whether a gratification to *himſelf*, or whether it proceeds from a diſintereſted regard to *them*, I cannot pretend to judge; but that the happineſs of the creation was intended by the author of it, is juſt as evident as that the deſign of the millwright was that the wheels of his machine ſhould keep in motion, and not that they ſhould be obſtructed.

If, notwithſtanding this obvious deſign, deduced from the conſideration of the animal economy, any of them, or all of them, ſhould not be found in a ſtate of actual health and enjoyment, I ſhould rather infer that their

their author had miſſed of his aim, and was diſappointed in what he had in view, than imagine he had not *intended* their health and their happineſs: as though I ſhould find that all the mills in my neighbourhood ſtood ſtill, and could not be kept in motion, I ſhould be ſtill ſatisfied, from their conſtruction, that they were intended to keep in motion, but that the artificer had been diſappointed in his object. However, in nature, it is a fact that a ſtate of health (that is tolerable, though not perfect health) is general, and a ſtate of ſickneſs comparatively rare. Upon the whole, therefore, the creation is happy, though not perfectly ſo; and the obvious end of the creation is, in fact, in a great meaſure, anſwered.

It is another argument for the benevolence of the Deity that many, and perhaps all pains and evils (the cauſes of pain) tend to check and exterminate themſelves; whereas pleaſures extend and propagate themſelves, and that without limits.

Pain itſelf is an affection of ſentient Beings. Now, all ſentient Beings that we

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are acquainted with (in whatever manner that effect is produced) endeavour to ſhun pains and procure pleaſures, and all the known cauſes of them. And as our knowledge and power, in this reſpect, advance with our experience, nothing is wanting to enable us to exterminate all pain, and to attain to complete happineſs, but a continuance of being.

Mental pains do as certainly tend to check and exterminate themſelves as the corporeal ones. For the ſenſations of ſhame and remorſe always lead us to avoid whatever it be in our conduct that has expoſed us to them; and the ſatisfaction we feel from having acquitted ourſelves with integrity and honour, does likewiſe encourage us to act the part that will beſt ſecure the continuance of that moſt valuable ſpecies of human felicity.

Where volition is not concerned (though the laws of volition are as much as any thing elſe in the ſyſtem of nature the laws of God) and mere mechaniſm takes place, it is acknowledged by phyſicians that all diſeaſes are the effort of nature to remove ſome obſtruction,

ſtruction, ſomething that impedes the animal functions, and thereby to defer the hour of diſſolution, and to recover a ſtate of more perfect health and enjoyment; ſo that nothing is wanting to the removal of all this claſs of evils, but a perfect *conformation* and ſufficient *ſtrength* of thoſe parts of the animal frame in which the diſorder is ſeated, with ſufficient *time* for them to diſcharge their proper functions. But the intention of nature, that is, of the God of nature, who works by general laws (in which, of courſe, there are many exceptions) is the ſame whether the animal ſurvive the ſtruggle, which is generally the caſe, or whether it ſinks under it. A hundred diſeaſes terminate favourably for one that is fatal. Every cold is the beginning of a fever, but very ſeldom proceeds ſo far as to receive ſo alarming an appellation.

If we look into the external world, we ſhall ſee equal reaſon to be thankful for cold weather, ſtorms, and tempeſts, with every thing elſe that we ſometimes complain of, as far as we are able to underſtand their

real

real tendency, and ultimate effects. And they are not only leſs evils in lieu of greater, but alſo (like the diſorders to which the animal frame is ſubject) tend to remove ſome obſtruction, and to diffuſe more equally either the *electric matter*, or ſomething elſe, the equal diſtribution of which is requiſite to the good condition of the world.

If we conſider *man*, the moſt important object in this part of the creation, we muſt conſider corporeal pleaſures as being of the leaſt conſequence to his happineſs, becauſe intellectual gratifications are evidently of unſpeakably more value to him. Man enjoys the time paſt and future as well as the preſent; and, in general, mankind are tolerably happy in this reſpect, deriving more pleaſure than pain from *reflection*. Man always hopes for the beſt; and even paſt labour and pain is generally pleaſing in recollection, ſo that whether he looks backwards or forwards, his views are upon the whole pleaſing.

If we conſider man in a moral reſpect, we ſhall find that for one man who really ſuffers from remorſe of conſcience, numbers think

ſo well of themſelves, and of their conduct, that it gives them pleaſure to reflect upon it; and, in fact, acts of kindneſs and benevolence far exceed thoſe of cruelty; and in all reſpects *moderation* (which is the ſtandard of virtue) is much more common than *exceſs*; and indeed if it was not ſo, exceſs would not be ſo much noticed, and cenſured as it is. Upon the whole, virtue ſeems to bear the ſame proportion to vice, that happineſs does to miſery, or health to ſickneſs, in the world.

Beſides, to judge of the intention of the Creator, we ſhould not only conſider the actual ſtate of things, but take in as much as we can of the *tendencies* of things in future. Now, it requires but little judgment to ſee that the world is in a ſtate of *melioration*, in a variety of reſpects; and for the ſame reaſon, it will probably continue to improve, and perhaps without limits; ſo that our poſterity have a much better proſpect before them than we have had.

A great proportion of the miſery of man is owing to *ignorance*, and it cannot be denied

nied that the world grows wiser every day. Phyſicians and ſurgeons know how much leſs men ſuffer now than they did in ſimilar caſes formerly, owing to improvements in the ſcience of medicine, and in ſurgical operations. To read of the methods of the ancients with reſpect to the ſtone in the bladder, is enough to fill one with horror. It was not till the time of Celſus that the practice of extracting the ſtone was known; and till of late years in compariſon, it was not expected that one in twenty of thoſe who ſubmitted to the operation would recover; whereas it is now a tolerably ſafe operation; and beſides, we are not without the hope of diſcovering methods of diſſolving the ſtone, without pain, in the bladder. This is only one of many inſtances of improvements that leſſen the ſufferings of mankind. This ſkill is indeed in a manner confined to Europeans, but theſe occupy a conſiderable part of the globe, and the knowledge of Europeans will, no doubt, gradually extend over the whole world.

Civilization and good government have made great advances in Europe, and by means of this men live in a ſtate of much greater ſecurity and happineſs; and even the intercourſe between diſtant places, and diſtant countries, is both ſafe and pleaſurable; whereas in former times, this intercourſe was hardly practicable. Let any perſon read of the ſtate of Italy, and that of the continent of Europe in general, in the times of Petrarch, and he will be ſatisfied that the preſent ſtate of things is a paradiſe in compariſon with it.

War is unſpeakably leſs dreadful than formerly, though it is a great evil ſtill; and as true political knowledge advances, and the advantages of *commerce*, which ſuppoſes a peaceable intercourſe, are more experienced, it is fairly to be preſumed, that wars will not fail to be leſs frequent, as well as leſs ſanguinary; ſo that ſocieties of men, as well as families and individuals, will find it to be their common intereſt to be good neighbours, and national jealouſy will give place to national generoſity.

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The progreſs of knowledge, and other cauſes, have greatly improved the ſpirit of the various *religions* that have prevailed in the world. Thoſe peculiarly horrid modes of religion which enjoined human ſacrifices, as well as many abominable practices, have been long extinct; and perſecution to death for conſcience ſake, by which the world ſuffered ſo much under the Pagan Roman emperors, and even the philoſophical and mild Marcus Aurelius, as well as in the days of Papal tyranny, and under other eccleſiaſtical hierarchies, we have reaſon to think, will hardly ever be revived; the folly as well as the cruelty of theſe practices is ſo generally acknowledged. In conſequence of this greater liberty of ſpeculating upon all ſubjects, truth has a much fairer chance of prevailing in the world; and the knowledge and general ſpread of truth cannot fail to be attended with a great variety of advantages, favourable to the virtue and happineſs of mankind.

We have no occaſion to conſider by what particular *means* theſe advantages have ac-

crued to mankind: for whatever the *ſecondary cauſes* may have been, they could not have operated without the kind proviſion of the firſt and proper cauſe of all; and therefore, they are to be conſidered as argutments of his benevolence, or of the preference that he gives to happineſs before miſery.

Upon the whole, the evidence for the *general benevolence* of the deity ſeems to be abundantly ſatisfactory, and all that can be objected on this ſubject is to the *infinite extent* of it. And yet it ſhould ſeem, that there can be no bounds to an affection that has been proved to be *real*. Why the Divine Being ſhould love his creatures *to a certain degree*, and no more, why he ſhould intend them a certain portion of happineſs, and not a greater, is a queſtion that cannot eaſily be anſwered. The probability, that an affection unqueſtionably real is actually unbounded, diſpoſes us to inquire whether, notwithſtanding appearances, this may not be the caſe here. And, though we cannot prove the ſtrict infinity of the divine benevolence, or give ſo much evidence for it as

we

we can for that of his power and knowledge; yet the probability will, I think, appear to be in favour of it, if we ſufficiently attend to the conſiderations that I ſhall urge in my next.

I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

Arguments for the infinite Benevolence of the Deity.

DEAR SIR,

HAVING ſhown, in my laſt letter, that the ſupreme cauſe of all things muſt be poſſeſſed of at leaſt *general benevolence*, in this I ſhall endeavour to ſhew that, notwithſtanding ſome ſeemingly contrary appearances, this benevolence *may*, in a ſufficiently proper ſenſe, be conſidered as *infinite*. For this purpoſe I would wiſh you to attend to the following conſiderations.

Firſt. That any *dependent Being* ſhould be at all times infinitely happy, muſt neceſſarily be impoſſible; for ſuch a Being muſt be infinitely knowing and powerful, that is, in fact, equal to the divine Being himſelf. The happineſs of every individual muſt, therefore, neceſſarily be *limited*, either in *degree*, or by a *mixture of unhappineſs*; and whether this neceſſary limitation is beſt made in one way or the other, can only be determined by the deity himſelf. However, the method of limitation by a *mixture of pain* will not, I dare ſay, appear uneligible to perſons of competent judgment.

It is even a common thing in human life to prefer this *variety*, rather than an unvaried degree of *moderate enjoyment*. This mode of limitation being ſuppoſed preferable, nothing remains to be cenſured, but the *degree* of miſery proper, or neceſſary, to be mixed with any proportion of happineſs, and the *time*, and other *circumſtances*, of the introduction of this miſery. And in this no perſon, ſurely, will pretend to dictate to a

Being

Being of infinite wiſdom, whoſe general benevolence is unqueſtionable. No objection of this kind, therefore, can deſerve any reply.

In theſe reſpects, however, the probability *a priori*, in general at leaſt, is in favour of what we ſee actually to take place; ſo that it is a fair preſumption, that, as our experience advances, we ſhall ſee more and more reaſon to be ſatisfied with the diſpenſations of providence. Becauſe, in general, we perceive a *gradation* in every thing from worſe to better, which is a circumſtance highly favourable to happineſs, as it encourages *hope*, which is itſelf a principal ingredient in human happineſs.

Several improvements in the ſtate of the world in general have been mentioned already, and the like is no leſs manifeſt in the caſe of individuals; the ſufferings of our infant ſtate exceeding thoſe that we meet with afterwards, all things conſidered. Suppoſing a ſtate of health, and competent ſubſiſtence for all, which (being the evident in-

tention of nature) muſt here be ſuppoſed, our enjoyments are continually increaſing in real value from infancy to old age. Let a child have the moſt perfect health, it is impoſſible to educate him in a proper manner, ſo as to lay a foundation for his own future happineſs, without ſubjecting him to many diſappointments and mortifications, with reſpect to which no ſatisfactory account can be given *him*, ſo as to make him acquieſce under them. Whereas, beſides that the purſuits and enjoyments of manhood are in themſelves greatly ſuperior to thoſe of childhood, we acquire by experience ſuch a *comprehenſion of mind*, as enables us to bear without murmuring the evils that fall to our lot; and as this comprehenſion of mind extends itſelf every day, ſuppoſing what here muſt alſo be ſuppoſed (as being within the intention of nature) a rational and virtuous life, our ſtock of intellectual enjoyments is augmenting continually, ſo that the moſt deſirable part of a well-ſpent life is *old age*. And it is evidently and highly ſo, provided that,

that, together with health, a man enjoys what is alſo the intention of nature, the ſociety of a riſing and promiſing family.

The peculiar ſatisfaction with which a chriſtian ſhuts his eyes on the world, will not, perhaps, be thought a proper article in this account; though, whether theſe hopes be well or ill founded, they are *actually enjoyed* by great numbers of the human race; and, together with every thing elſe that actually takes place, muſt have been intended for us in this life. However, I am well ſatisfied that a properly natural death, or death occaſioned by the mere exhauſting (as we may term it) of the vital powers, in a ſufficient length of time, provided no ſuperſtitious fears accompany it, is not attended with averſion or pain.

Perhaps no part of the general ſyſtem will appear at firſt ſight more liable to objection than this circumſtance of *death*, and the train of diſeaſes that lead to it. But by this means room is made for a *ſucceſſion of creatures*, of each ſpecies, ſo that the *ſum of happineſs* is, upon the whole, greater. With reſpect

reſpect to man, unleſs the whole plan of his conſtitution, and all the laws of his nature, were changed, it is unſpeakably more deſirable that there ſhould be a ſucceſſion, than that the ſame individuals ſhould continue on the ſtage always. For a new generation learns wiſdom from the follies of the old, which would only have grown more inveterate every year. Thus the whole ſpecies advances more quickly to maturity; and to the *ſpecies*, the obſtinacy, and other infirmities of old age, will probably be ever unknown.

Secondly, pain itſelf, and *as ſuch*, is not without its real uſe with reſpect to true happineſs; ſo that, other circumſtances (of which we can be no judges) being ſuppoſed right, we have reaſon to be thankful for the pains and diſtreſſes to which we are ſubject. For pain muſt not be conſidered only with reſpect to the moment of ſenſation, but alſo as to its future neceſſary effects; and according to the general law of our nature, admirably explained by Dr. Hartley, the impreſſions of pain remaining in the mind

fall at length within the limits of pleaſure, and contribute moſt of all to the future enjoyment of life; ſo that, without this reſource, life would neceſſarily grow inſipid and tireſome.

However, without recurring to abſtruſe conſiderations, it is well known, that the recollection of paſt troubles, after a certain interval, becomes highly pleaſurable; and it is a pleaſure of a very durable kind. It is ſo generally known to be ſo, as to furniſh an argument for bearing troubles, and making them leſs felt at the time of their greateſt preſſure. Thus Æneas, in Virgil, is repreſented as ſaying to his companions in diſtreſs, *poſt hæc meminiſſe juvabit.*

Nothing can be more evident than the uſe of pain to children. How is it poſſible to teach them ſufficient caution againſt abſolute deſtruction, by falls, burns, &c. but by the actual feeling of pain from theſe circumſtances. No parent, or any perſon who has given much attention to children, will ſay that admonition alone would anſwer the purpoſe;

purpoſe; whereas greater evils are moſt effectually prevented, in the admirable plan of nature, by the actual experience of leſs evils. What is more pungent than the ſtings of ſhame and remorſe, in conſequence of improprieties in conduct, and of vices? But could prudence and virtue be effectually inculcated by any other means? No perſon converſant in the buſineſs of education will venture to ſay that they could.

As the pains and mortifications of our infant ſtate are the natural means of leſſening the pains and mortifications of advanced life; ſo I made it appear to the ſatisfaction of Dr. Hartley, in the ſhort correſpondence I had with him, that his theory furniſhes pretty fair preſumptions, that the pains of this life may ſuffice for the whole of our future exiſtence; we having now reſources enow for a perpetual increaſe in happineſs, without any aſſiſtance from the ſenſation of future pain. This ſpeculation will probably appear before the public in due time, together with other obſervations relating

to

to the extenſion and application of this wonderfully ſimple theory of the mental affections.

Theſe conſiderations appear to me abundantly ſufficient to convince us, that even the unlimited benevolence of the author of nature is not affected by the partial evils to which we are ſubject. But ſtill it will be ſaid, that a Being of pure and perfect benevolence might have obviated this inconvenience, by a different original conſtitution of nature, in which evils might not have been neceſſary, not being of any uſe to us as ſuch.

But, I anſwer, this is more than we can pretend to ſay is even *poſſible*, or within the limits of infinite power itſelf; and there is this pretty good reaſon for preſuming that it is ſo, which is, that in preſent circumſtances we always ſee (wherever we can ſee enough to be in any meaſure judges) that the methods that are taken are the beſt for us, all other things connected with them being conſidered; and the ſame *diſpoſition* in our author to provide the beſt for us in one

caſe would lead him to provide the beſt for us in another: ſo that, if, *cæteris manentibus*, every thing is for the beſt, we may conclude that the *whole* is for the beſt; the diſpoſition of mind to make this proviſion being the very ſame in both caſes.

Suppoſing it poſſible, therefore, for the Divine Being to have created men with all the feelings and ideas that are acquired in the courſe of a painful and laborious life; ſince it muſt have been in violation of all *general laws*, we have reaſon to conclude that laws, or general methods of acting, are preferable to no laws at all; and that it is better, upon the whole, that the divine agency ſhould not be ſo very conſpicuous, as it muſt have been upon the plan of a conſtant and momentary interference.

It is plain there could be little room for the exerciſe of *wiſdom*, in God or man, if there had been no general laws. For the whole plan of nature, from which we infer deſign or wiſdom, is admirable, chiefly on account of its being a ſyſtem of wonderfully general and ſimple laws, ſo that innumerable

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ends are gained by the fewest means, and the greatest good produced with the least possible evil. And the wisdom and foresight of man could have had no scope, if there had been no invariable plan of nature to be the object of his investigation and study, by which to guide his conduct, and direct his expectations.

In comparison with the solid advantages we derive from the exercise of our faculties on this plan of general laws, how trifling are those that would accrue to us from even the frequent interruption, and much more from the total abrogation of them? What could we gain but that a child falling into the fire should not be burned, or that a man falling from a precipice should not be dashed to pieces? But all the accidents that happen of this kind, and which our reason is given us to enable us to guard against, are surely not to be bought off at such a price as this. How little do we suffer on the whole by accidents from *fire*, compared with the benefits we derive from it; and how much greater gainers are we still on the balance by the great *law of gravitation*.

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The advantage, if not the neceſſity, of general laws, is beſt ſeen in the conduct of a large family, of a ſchool, or of a community; becauſe the good of the whole muſt be conſulted in conjunction with that of each individual; and we often find it to be wiſe and right to ſuffer individuals to bring themſelves into difficulties, from which we would gladly relieve them, if we had not reſpect to others who are equally under our care. How often is a favourite child, or pupil, puniſhed, or an uſeful member of ſociety falſely convicted of a crime, ſuffered to die, rather than violate general rules, ſalutary to the whole. Now, as ſmall ſocieties cannot be governed without general rules, and particular inconveniencies; it may, for any thing that we know, be naturally impoſſible to govern the large ſociety of mankind without ſuch general laws, though attended with particular inconveniencies.

If it be ſaid that the Divine Being might *conceal* his violation of the laws of nature for the benefit of individuals, I anſwer that thoſe individuals would, without a ſecond interference, loſe the benefit they would have derived

derived from their ſufferings as ſuch (teaching them caution, &c.) and if the Divine Being did this in all caſes, to prevent all evil, there would be no general laws at all; and who can direct him when to interfere, and when not? As to very rare caſes, it is poſſible, though I own not probable (becauſe it would imply a want of foreſight in the original plan) that the Divine Being does interfere in this inviſible manner.

If we conſider the human race as the moſt valuable of the divine productions on the face of the earth, and intellectual happineſs as the moſt valuable part of his happineſs; if the training of men to great elevation of thought, comprehenſion of mind, virtuous affections, and generous actions, be any object with the great Author of all things (and the good of the whole ſeems to require that there ſhould be a proportion of ſuch exalted beings) this world, with all its imperfections, as we think them, is perhaps the beſt poſſible ſchool in which they could be thus trained. How could we be taught compaſſion for others, without ſuffering ourſelves, and where

could the rudiments of the heroic virtues of fortitude, patience, clemency, &c. be acquired but in the ſchool of adverſity, in ſtruggling with hardſhips, and contending with oppreſſion, ingratitude, and other vices, moral evils as well as natural ones?

If we ſuppoſe theſe truly great minds formed here, as in a *nurſery*, for the purpoſe of future exiſtence, reſpecting their own happineſs, or that of others, the conſideration will furniſh another argument for the preſent ſtate of things. What evidence there is of this being the caſe we ſhall ſee hereafter.

Upon the whole, it is very poſſible, notwithſtanding ſome appearances to the contrary, that the affection of the univerſal parent to his offſpring may be even *boundleſs*, or, properly ſpeaking, *infinite*; and alſo that the actual happineſs of the whole creation may be conſidered as infinite, notwithſtanding all the partial evil there is in it. For if good prevail upon the whole, the creation being ſuppoſed infinite, happineſs will be infinitely extended; and in the eye of a being of

of perfect comprehenſion, ſuch as the Divine Being muſt be, capable of perceiving the balance of good only, it will be happineſs unmixed with miſery. Nay, ſuppoſing men (and it is of men only that I am now treating) to live for ever, if each be happy upon the whole, and eſpecially if the happineſs of each be conſtantly accelerated, each individual may be ſaid to be infinitely happy in the whole of his exiſtence; ſo that to the divine comprehenſion the whole will be happineſs *infinito-infinite*. See Dr. Hartley's admirable illuſtration of this ſubject, in the ſecond volume of his *Obſervations on Man*.

I am, &c.

LETTER VII.

The Evidence of the moral Government of the World, and the Branches of natural Religion.

DEAR SIR,

IF you will admit that I have proved to your ſatisfaction that there is a God, a firſt cauſe, poſſeſſed of infinite power, wiſ-

dom and goodneſs, or only of ſuch degrees of thoſe attributes as, in a popular ſenſe of the word, may be deemed infinite, that is, far exceeding our comprehenſion, nothing more will be requiſite to prove every moral perfection, and that we are under a proper *moral government*.

Juſtice, mercy, and veracity, with every thing elſe that is of a *moral nature*, are, in fact, and philoſophically conſidered, only modifications of benevolence. For a Being, ſimply and truly *benevolent*, will neceſſarily act according to what are called the rules of *juſtice*, *mercy*, and *veracity*; becauſe in no other way can he promote the good of ſuch moral agents, as are ſubject to his government. Even *juſtice* itſelf, which ſeems to be the moſt oppoſite to goodneſs, is ſuch a degree of ſeverity, or pains and penalties ſo inflicted, as will produce the beſt effect, with reſpect both to thoſe who are expoſed to them, and to others who are under the ſame government; or, in other words, that degree of evil which is calculated to produce the greateſt degree of good;

and if the punishment exceed this measure, if, in any instance, it be an *unnecessary*, or *useless suffering*, it is always censured as *cruelty*, and is not even called justice, but real injustice.

For the same reason, if, in any particular case, the strict execution of the law would do more harm than good, it is universally agreed that the punishment ought to be remitted, and then what we call *mercy*, or clemency, will take place; but it does not deserve the name of clemency, nor is it worthy of commendation as a *virtue*, but it is censured as a weakness, or something worse, if it be so circumstanced as to encourage the commission of crimes, and consequently make more suffering necessary in future. In short, a truly good and wise governor frames the whole of his administration with a view to the happiness of his subjects, or he will endeavour to produce the greatest sum of happiness with the least possible mixture of pain or misery.

But you will check me in the course of this argument, and say, that if moral go-

vernment be the neceſſary reſult of benevolence, we ought to perceive ſome traces of this moral government before we can admit the ſupreme Being to be benevolent, and that this ought to be the principal argument for his benevolence.

I acknowledge it, but at the ſame time I muſt obſerve that any independent evidence of benevolence, ſuch as I have produced, is a ſtrong proof, *a priori*, that there will be a moral government; becauſe, as I have juſt ſhewn, if benevolence be uniform and conſiſtent, it muſt produce moral government, where moral agents are concerned; ſo that, having this previous reaſon to expect a moral government, we ought to ſuppoſe that ſuch a government *does* exiſt, unleſs there be evident proof of the contrary. Becauſe if this proof be indiſputable, it muſt be concluded that the ſupreme Being is not benevolent, of which we are ſuppoſed to have already other independent evidence.

Now, the mere *delay of puniſhment*, which is all that we can alledge againſt the reality of a preſent moral government, is no evi-

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dence againſt it, ſo long as the offender is within the reach of juſtice; becauſe it may be an inſtance of the wiſdom and juſt diſcretion of a governor, to give all his ſubjects a ſufficient *trial*, and treat them according to their *general character*, allowing ſufficient time in which to form that character, rather than exact an immediate puniſhment for every particular offence.

It is no uncommon thing with *men* not to puniſh for the firſt offence, but to give room for amendment; and it may be the more expected of *God*, whoſe juſtice no criminal can finally eſcape, and whoſe penetration no artifice can impoſe upon. Had human magiſtrates more knowledge, and more power, they might, in that proportion, give greater ſcope to men to form, and to ſhew, their characters, by deferring to take cognizance of crimes. It is becauſe criminals may impoſe upon them by pretences of reformation, or eſcape from their hands, that it is, in general, wiſe in them to animadvert upon crimes without much delay, and with few exceptions.

For any thing that appears, therefore, the preſent ſtate of the world (notwithſtanding, in ſome reſpects, *all things fall alike to all*, and a viſible diſtinction is not always made between the righteous and the wicked; and even notwithſtanding the wicked may, in ſome caſes, derive an advantage from their vices) may perfectly correſpond to ſuch a ſtate of moral government as a Being of infinite wiſdom and power would exerciſe towards mankind. And if this only *may* be the caſe, any independent evidence of the divine benevolence ought to make us conclude that this *is* the caſe, and lead us to expect that, at a proper time (of which the Divine Being himſelf is the only judge) both the righteous and the wicked will meet with their juſt and full recompence.

But there is not wanting *independent*, and ſufficient evidence, of a moral government of the world, ſimilar to the independent evidence of the benevolence of its author. For, notwithſtanding what has been admitted above, reſpecting the promiſcuous diſtribution of happineſs and miſery in the world,

world, it is unqueſtionable, that virtue gives a man a better chance for happineſs than vice.

What happineſs can any man enjoy without *health*, and is not temperance favourable to health, and intemperance the bane of it? What are all the outward advantages of life without *peace of mind*; and whatever be the proximate cauſe of it, it is a fact, and therefore muſt have been the intention of our maker, that peace of mind is the natural companion of integrity and honour, and not of fraud and injuſtice. It is the fruit of benevolence, and of that courſe of conduct which ariſes from it, and by no means of malevolence. Do we not alſo ſee that a moderate competency, which is much more valuable than riches, is generally the reward of fidelity and induſtry, and that poſſeſſions acquired by diſhoneſt arts are very inſecure, if, on other accounts, a man could have any enjoyment of them. What but common obſervation has given riſe to the common proverb, that *honeſty is the beſt policy?*

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The beſt definition and criterion of virtue is, "that diſpoſition of mind, and that "courſe of conduct ariſing from it, which "is beſt calculated to promote a man's own "happineſs, and the happineſs of others "with whom he is connected;" and to prove any thing to be really and ultimately miſchievous, is the ſame thing as to prove it to be vicious and wrong. The rule of temperance is to eat and drink ſo as to lay a foundation for health, and conſequently enjoyment; and intemperance does not conſiſt in the pleaſure we receive from the gratification of our appetites, but in procuring momentary pleaſure with future and more laſting pain; in laying a foundation for diſeaſes, and thereby diſqualifying a man for enjoying life himſelf, or contributing to the happineſs of others who are dependent upon him. In the ſame manner we fix the boundaries of all the vices, and all the virtues. Virtue is, in fact, that which naturally produces the greateſt ſum of good, and vice is that which produces the greateſt ſum of evil.

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In ſhort, the virtuous man is he that acts with the greateſt wiſdom and comprehenſion of mind, having reſpect to what is future as well as what is preſent; and the vicious man is he that acts with the leaſt juſt prudence and foreſight, catching at preſent pleaſure and advantage, and neglecting what is future, though of more value to him. It cannot, therefore, but be, that virtue muſt, upon the whole, lead to happineſs, and vice to miſery; and ſince this ariſes from the conſtitution of nature, and of the world, it muſt have been the intention of the author of nature that it ſhould be ſo.

Alſo, as from the *general* benevolence of the deity we inferred his *infinite* benevolence, ſo from his general reſpect to virtue we may infer his ſtrict and invariable reſpect to it; and as it cannot but appear probable that partial evils muſt be admitted by an all-powerful, and certainly a benevolent Being, becauſe they may be, in a manner unknown to us, connected with, or productive of, good; ſo there is an equal probability that, in the adminiſtration of a Being of infinite power

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and wiſdom (and certainly a favourer of virtue, as of happineſs) all irregularities in the diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments are either only ſeemingly ſo, or merely temporary; and that, when the whole ſcheme ſhall be completed, they will appear to have been proper parts of the moſt perfect moral adminiſtration.

Since then it is a fact, that we are in a ſtate juſtly intitled to the appellation of *moral government* (this being not only preſumed from the conſideration of the divine benevolence previouſly eſtabliſhed, but alſo deduced independently, from actual appearances) there muſt be a foundation for what may be termed *natural religion*; that is, there is a ſyſtem of *duty* to which we ought to conform, becauſe there are *rewards and puniſhments* that we have to expect.

Our duty with reſpect to *ourſelves* and *others* is, in general, ſufficiently obvious, becauſe it is, in fact, nothing more than to *feel*, and to *act*, as our own true and ultimate happineſs, in conjunction with that of others, requires. With reſpect to the *Di-*

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vine Being, we muſt be guided by analogies, which, however, are tolerably diſtinct.

Thus, if gratitude be due to human benefactors, it muſt be due in a greater degree to God, from whom we receive unſpeakably more then from man; and, in like manner, it muſt be concluded to be our duty to reverence him, to reſpect his authority, and to confide in the wiſdom and goodneſs of his providence. For ſince he made us, it muſt be evident that we are not beneath his notice and attention; and ſince all the laws of nature, to which we are ſubject, are his eſtabliſhment, nothing that befals us can be unforeſeen, or, conſequently, unintended by him. With this perſuaſion, we muſt ſee and reſpect the hand of God in every thing. And if every thing is as God intended it to be, it is the ſame thing to us whether this intention was formed the moment immediately preceding any particular event, or from all eternity.

If reverence, gratitude, obedience, and confidence, be our duty with reſpect to God (which we infer from the analogy of thoſe duties

duties to men) it is agreeable to the ſame analogy, that we *expreſs* theſe ſentiments in words; and this is done in the moſt natural manner, agreeably to the ſame analogy, in a direct *addreſs* to the Author of our being; ſo that the principles of natural religion, properly purſued, will lead us to *prayer*.

That we ſhould expreſs our reverence for God, our gratitude to him, and our confidence in him, is generally thought reaſonable; but it is ſaid that we are not authoriſed to *aſk* any thing of him. But even this is unavoidable; if we follow the analogy above-mentioned. Conſidering God as our governor, father, guardian, or protector, we cannot reſiſt the impulſe to apply to him in our difficulties, as to any other being or perſon, ſtanding in the ſame relation to us. Analogy ſets aſide all diſtinction in this caſe; and if the analogy itſelf be natural, it is itſelf a part of the conſtitution of nature, and, therefore, ſufficiently authoriſes whatever is agreeable to it.

It is no objection to the natural duty of prayer to God, that he is ſuppoſed to know

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our wants, and to be the beſt judge of the propriety of ſupplying them. For we ourſelves may have the ſame good diſpoſition towards our children, and yet ſee ſufficient reaſon for inſiſting upon their perſonal application to us, as an expreſſion of their obligation, and a neceſſary means of cultivating a due ſenſe of their relation to us, and dependence upon us.

The idea of every thing being *predetermined* from all eternity, is no objection to prayer, becauſe all *means* are appointed as well as *ends*; and, therefore, if prayer be in itſelf a proper means, the end to be obtained by it, we may be aſſured, will not be had without *this*, any more than without any other means, or neceſſary previous circumſtances. No man will refrain from plowing his ground becauſe God foreſees whether he will have a harveſt or not. It is ſufficient for us to know that there never has been, and therefore probably never will be, any harveſt without previous plowing. Knowing this, if we only have the deſire of harveſt,

plowing

plowing the ground, and every thing elſe that we know to be previouſly neceſſary to it, and to be *within our power*, will be done by us of courſe.

It is poſſible, however, that were we as perfect as our nature and ſtate will admit, having acquired all the comprehenſion of mind to which we can ever attain, and having a ſteady belief in the infinite wiſdom, power, and goodneſs of God, with a conſtant ſenſe of his preſence with us, and unremitted attention to us, our devotion might be nothing more than a deep *reverence* and joyful *confidence*, perſuaded that all the divine diſpoſals were right and kind; and in their calmer moments very excellent and good men *do* approach to this ſtate. They feel no occaſion to *aſk* for any thing, becauſe they feel *no want* of any thing. But the generality of mankind always, and the beſt of men not poſſeſſing themſelves at all times with equal tranquility, muſt, and will, acquieſce in a devotion of a leſs perfect form. And the Divine Being, knowing this imperfect ſtate of

of our nature, muſt *mean* that we ſhould act agreeably to it, and *require* of us expreſſions of devotion adapted to our imperfect ſtate.

This progreſs is alſo agreeable to the analogy of nature: for when our children are fully poſſeſſed of that affection for us, and confidence in us, which was the object and end of any formal preſcribed mode of addreſs, &c. we do not inſiſt upon the *form*. We are then ſatisfied with their experienced attachment to us, and make them equally the objects of our kind attention, whether they apply to us in form for what they want, or not.

In all this, you ſee, we muſt content ourſelves with following the beſt analogies we can find, and thoſe are clearly in favour of a *duty to God*, as well as to man, and for the ſame reaſon, a duty and a behaviour ſimilar to that which we acknowledge to be due to our parents, guardians, and friends, but differing in proportion to the infinite ſuperiority of the ſupreme Being to every inferior Being, and the infinitely greater magnitude of our obligations to him. Let us now ſee

whether there be any analogy, from the common courſe of nature, that can give us any inſight into the *extent* and *duration* of the ſyſtem of moral government under which we manifeſtly are. But this I ſhall reſerve for the ſubject of another letter. In the mean time,

I am,

Dear Sir, &c.

LETTER VIII.

Of the Evidence for the future Exiſtence of Man.

DEAR SIR,

I Have already obſerved that benevolence, once proved to be *real*, can hardly be conceived to be other than *boundleſs*; and this muſt be more eſpecially the caſe with the Supreme Being, who can have no rival, or be jealous of any Being whatever. Such Beings

Beings as *we* are may really wiſh well to others, and yet may wiſh them only a *certain degree* of happineſs; but then the deſire of that limitation will be found, if it be examined, to be occaſioned by ſomething peculiar to our ſituation, as limited and imperfect Beings, and what can have no place with the Deity. His benevolence, if real, muſt, as we ſhould think, be boundleſs. He muſt, therefore, wiſh the greateſt good of his creation, and the limitation to the preſent *actual happineſs* of the univerſe muſt ariſe from *perfection of happineſs* being incompatible with the nature of created, and, conſequently, finite Beings, and with that mixture of pain, which may be really neceſſary, according to the beſt poſſible general conſtitution of nature, to promote this happineſs.

But pain, we have ſeen, tends to limit and exclude itſelf, and things are evidently in a progreſs to a better ſtate. There is ſome reaſon, therefore, to expect that this *melioration* will go on without limits. And as exact and equal government ariſes from perfect benevolence (and even, independent of

the arguments for benevolence, does take place in ſome degree) we cannot, as it ſhould ſeem, but be led by this analogy to expect a more perfect retribution than we ſee to take place here, and, conſequently, to look for a ſtate where moral agents will find more exact rewards for virtue, and more ample puniſhments for vice than they meet with in this world. I do not ſay that the argument from theſe analogies is ſo ſtrong as to produce a *confident expectation* of ſuch a future ſtate; but it certainly, in fact, produces a *wiſh* for it; and this wiſh itſelf, being produced by the analogy of nature, is ſome evidence of the thing wiſhed for.

Other analogies, it is acknowledged, tend to damp this expectation. We ſee that men, whoſe powers of perception and thought depend upon the organized ſtate of the brain, decay and die, exactly like plants, or the inferior animals, and we ſee no inſtance of any revival. But ſtill, while there exiſts in nature a power unqueſtionably equal to their revival (for it is the power that actually brought them into being at firſt) the former

analogies

analogies may lead us to look for this future ſtate of more exact retribution, to which we ſee ſomething like a reference in this, and for a more copious diſplay of the divine goodneſs, even beyond the grave.

On ſome, eſpecially on perſons conſcious of great integrity, and of great ſufferings in conſequence of it, theſe analogies will make a greater impreſſion, will produce a more earneſt *longing*, and, conſequently, a ſtronger *faith*, than others will have; and the ſame perſons will, for the ſame reaſon, be affected by them differently at different times. This fluctuation, and degree of uncertainty, muſt make every rational Being, and eſpecially every good man, who rejoices in what he ſees of the works and government of God, earneſtly long for farther information on this moſt intereſting ſubject; and this farther information we may perhaps find the univerſal father has actually given us.

I think it of ſome importance to obſerve, that the degree of moral government under which we are (the conſtitution of nature evidently favouring a courſe of virtue, and

frowning upon a courſe of vice) is a *fact* independent of all reaſoning concerning the exiſtence of God himſelf, and, therefore, ought to determine the conduct of thoſe who are not ſatisfied with reſpect to the proof of the being and attributes of God, and even of thoſe who are properly *atheiſts*, believing that nothing exiſts beſides the world, or the univerſe, of which we ourſelves are a part.

Whether there be any *author of nature*, or not, there cannot be any doubt of there being *an eſtabliſhed courſe of nature*; and an atheiſt muſt believe it to be the more firmly eſtabliſhed, and ſee leſs proſpect of any change, from acknowledging no ſuperior Being capable of producing that change. If, therefore, the courſe of nature be actually in favour of virtue, it muſt be the intereſt and wiſdom of every human Being to be virtuous. And farther, if it be agreeable to the analogy of nature, independent of any conſideration of the author of it, that things are in an improving ſtate, and, conſequently, that there is a tendency to a more exact

and equal retribution, it muſt produce an expectation that this courſe of nature will *go on* to favour virtue ſtill more; and, therefore, it may be within the courſe of nature that men, as *moral agents*, ſhould ſurvive the grave, or be *re-produced*, to enjoy the full reward of virtue, or to ſuffer the puniſhments due to their vices.

It is acknowledged that we have no idea *how* this can come to paſs, but neither have we, any knowledge how we, that is, the human ſpecies, came into being; ſo that, for any thing we know to the contrary, our *re-production* may be as much within the proper courſe of nature, as our original production; and, conſequently, nothing hinders but that our expectation of a more perfect ſtate of things, and a ſtate of more exact retribution, raiſed by the obſervation of the actual courſe of nature, may be fulfilled. There may, therefore, be *a future ſtate*, even though there be no God at all. That is, as it is certainly, and independently of all other conſiderations, our wiſdom to be virtuous in this life, it may be equally our

wiſdom to be virtuous with a view to a life to come. And, faint as this probability may be thought, it is however *ſomething*, and muſt add ſomething to the ſanctions of virtue. Let not atheiſts, therefore, think themſelves *quite ſecure* with reſpect to a future life. Things as extraordinary as this, eſpecially upon the hypotheſis of there being no God, have taken place, and therefore this, which is ſufficiently analogous to the reſt, *may* take place alſo.

Let any perſon only conſider attentively the meaneſt plant that comes in his way, and he cannot but diſcover a wonderful *extent of view* in the adaptation of every part of it to the reſt, as of the root to the ſtem, the ſtem to the leaf, the leaf to the flower, the flower to the fruit, the fruit to the ſeed, &c. &c. &c. He will alſo perceive as wonderful an adaptation of all theſe to the ſoil, and the climate; and to the deſtined duration mode and extent of propagation, &c. of the plant. He will alſo perceive a wonderful relation of one plant to another, with reſpect to ſimilarity of ſtructure, uſes, and

mutual ſubſerviency. He will perceive another relation that they bear to the animals that feed upon them, or, in any other reſpect, avail themſelves of them. In extending his reſearches, he will perceive an equal *extent of view* in the parts of the animal œconomy, their relation to the vegetable world, and to one another, as of the carnivorous to the graminivorous, &c. and of every thing belonging to them, to their rank, place, and uſe, in the ſyſtem of the world.

After this, let him conſider this world, that is, the earth, as part of a greater ſyſtem, (each part of which, probably, as perfect in its kind) with the probable relation of the ſolar ſyſtem itſelf to other ſyſtems in the viſible univerſe. And then, whether he ſuppoſe that there is any *author of nature*, or not, he muſt ſee that, *by ſome means or other*, nothing is ever wanting, however remote in time or place, to render every thing *complete in its kind*. And if his mind be ſufficiently impreſſed with theſe *facts*, and the conſideration of the many events that daily take place,

of

of which he could not have the leaſt previous expectation, and of the efficient or proximate cauſes of which he is wholly ignorant, and he will not think it impoſſible, that, if any other particular event, of whatever magnitude, even the re-production of the whole human race after a certain period, will make the ſyſtem *more complete*, even that event may take place, though he be ever ſo ignorant of the proximate cauſe of it. That there is both a *power* in nature, and an *extent of view*, abundantly adequate to it, if he have any knowledge of *actual exiſtence*, he muſt be ſatisfied. In proportion, therefore, to his idea of the *propriety* and *importance* of any future ſtate of things, in that proportion will be his *expectation* of it. Our ignorance of the *means* by which any particular future ſtate of things may be brought about, is balanced by our acknowledged ignorance of the means in other caſes, where the reſult is indiſputable; though we are continually advancing in the diſcovery of theſe means in our inveſtigation of the more general laws of nature.

A retro-

A retroſpective view to our former ignorance in other caſes will be uſeful to us here. Time was when the total ſolution of a piece of metal in a chymical menſtruum would ſeem to be as abſolute a *loſs* of it, as the diſſolution of a human body by putrefaction, and the recovery of it would have been thought as hopeleſs. And, antecedent to our knowledge of the courſe of nature, the burying of a ſeed in the earth would ſeem to have as little tendency to the re-production of the plant. Where there certainly exiſts a power equal to any production, or any event, any thing that is *poſſible in itſelf* may be, and the difference in *antecedent probability* is only that of greater and leſs.

I am, &c.

LETTER

LETTER IX.

An Examination of Mr. Hume's DIALOGUES ON NATURAL RELIGION.

DEAR SIR,

I Am glad to find that you think there is at leaſt ſome appearance of weight in what, at your requeſt, I have urged, in anſwer to the objections againſt the belief of a God and a providence; and I am confident the more attention you give to the ſubject, the ſtronger will thoſe arguments appear, and the more trifling and undeſerving of regard you will think the cavils of atheiſts, ancient or modern. You wiſh, however, to know diſtinctly what I think of *Mr. Hume's poſthumous Dialogues on Natural Religion*; becauſe, coming from a writer of ſome note, that work is frequently a topic of converſation in the ſocieties you frequent.

With reſpect to *Mr. Hume's metaphyſical writings* in general, my opinion is, that, on the

the whole, the world is very little the wiſer for them. For though, when the merits of any queſtion were on his ſide, few men ever wrote with more perſpicuity, the arrangement of his thoughts being natural, and his illuſtrations peculiarly happy; yet I can hardly think that we are indebted to him for the leaſt real advance in the knowledge of the human mind. Indeed, according to his own very frank confeſſion, his object was mere *literary reputation* *. It was not the *purſuit of truth*, or the advancement of virtue and happineſs; and it was much more eaſy to make a figure by diſturbing the ſyſtems of others, than by erecting any of his own. All ſchemes have their reſpective weak ſides, which a man who has nothing of his own to riſk may more eaſily find, and expoſe.

In many of his *Eſſays* (which, in general, are exceſſively wire-drawn) Mr. Hume ſeems to have had nothing in view but to *amuſe* his readers, which he generally does agree-

* See his Life, written by himſelf, p. 32, 33.

ably enough; propoſing doubts to received hypotheſes, leaving them without any ſolution, and altogether unconcerned about it. In ſhort, he is to be conſidered in theſe *Eſſays* as a mere *writer* or *declaimer*, even more than Cicero in his book of Tuſculan Queſtions.

He ſeems not to have given himſelf the trouble ſo much as to read *Dr. Hartley's Obſervations on Man*, a work which he could not but have heard of, and which it certainly behoved him to ſtudy. The doctrine of *aſſociation of ideas*, as explained and extended by Dr. Hartley, ſupplies materials for the moſt ſatisfactory ſolution of almoſt all the difficulties he has ſtarted, as I could eaſily ſhew if I thought it of any conſequence; ſo that to a perſon acquainted with this theory of the human mind, *Hume's Eſſays* appear the mereſt trifling. Compared with Dr. Hartley, I conſider Mr. Hume as not even a child.

Now, I will frankly tell you, that this laſt performance of Mr. Hume has by no means changed for the better the idea I had before formed

formed of him as a metaphyſical writer. The dialogue is ingeniouſly and artfully conducted. Philo, who evidently ſpeaks the ſentiments of the writer, is not made to ſay all the good things that are advanced, his opponents are not made to ſay any thing that is very palpably abſurd, and every thing is made to paſs with great decency and decorum.

But though Philo, in the moſt intereſting part of the debate, advances nothing but common-place objections againſt the belief of a God, and hackneyed declamation againſt the plan of providence, his antagoniſts are ſeldom repreſented as making any ſatisfactory reply. And when, at the laſt, evidently to ſave appearances, he relinquiſhes the argument, on which he had expatiated with ſo much triumph, it is without alledging any ſufficient reaſon; ſo that his arguments are left, as no doubt the writer intended, to have their full effect on the mind of the reader. Alſo though the debate ſeemingly cloſes in favour of the theiſt, the victory is clearly on the ſide of the atheiſt.

atheiſt. I therefore ſhall not be ſurpriſed if this work ſhould have a conſiderable effect in promoting the cauſe of atheiſm, with thoſe whoſe *general turn of thinking*, and *habits of life*, make them no ill-wiſhers to that ſcheme.

To ſatisfy your wiſhes, I ſhall recite what I think has moſt of the appearance of ſtrength, or plauſibility, in what Mr. Hume has advanced on the atheiſtical ſide of the queſtion, though it will neceſſarily lead me to repeat ſome things that I have obſerved already; but I ſhall endeavour to do it in ſuch a manner, that you will not deem it quite idle and uſeleſs repetition.

With reſpect to the general argument for the being of God, from the marks of deſign in the univerſe, he ſays, p. 65, "Will any "man tell me, with a ſerious countenance, "that an orderly univerſe muſt ariſe from "ſome thought and art, like the human, "becauſe we have experience of it. To "aſcertain this reaſoning, it were requiſite "that we had experience of the origin of "worlds, and it is not ſufficient, ſurely, that

"we

"we have ſeen ſhips and cities ariſe from "human art and contrivance."

Now, if it be admitted that there are marks of deſign in the univerſe, as numberleſs fitneſſes of things to things prove beyond all diſpute, is it not a neceſſary conſequence, that if it had a cauſe at all, it muſt be one that is capable of deſign? Will any perſon ſay that an eye could have been conſtructed by a Being who had no knowledge of optics, who did not know the nature of light, or the laws of refraction? And muſt not the univerſe have had a cauſe, as well as any thing elſe, that is finite and incapable of comprehending itſelf?

We might juſt as reaſonably ſay, that any particular ſhip, or city, any particular horſe, or man, had nothing exiſting ſuperior to it, as that the viſible univerſe had nothing ſuperior to it, if the univerſe be no more capable of comprehending itſelf than a ſhip, or a city, a horſe, or a man. There can be no harm in the words *world* or *univerſe*, ſo that they ſhould require no cauſe when they ſtand in preciſely the ſame predicament with

other things that evidently *do* require a superior cause, and could not have existed without one.

All that Mr. Hume says on the difficulty of stopping at the idea of an uncaused Being, is on the supposition that this uncaused Being is a *finite one*, incapable of comprehending itself, and, therefore, in the same predicament with a ship or a house, a horse or a man, which it is impossible to conceive to have existed without a superior cause. "How shall we satisfy ourselves," says he, p. 93, &c. "concerning the cause of that "Being whom you suppose the author of "nature.—If we stop and go no farther, "why go so far, why not stop at the mate-"rial world. How can we satisfy ourselves "without going on in infinitum.—By sup-"posing it to contain the principle of order "within itself, we really assert it to be God, "and the soonest we arrive at that Divine "Being, so much the better. When you "go one step beyond the mundane system, "you only excite an inquisitive humour, "which it is impossible ever to satisfy."

It is very true, that no person can satisfy himself with going backwards *in infinitum* from one thing that requires a superior cause, to another that equally requires a superior cause. But any person may be sufficiently satisfied with going back through finite causes as far as he has evidence of the existence of intermediate finite causes; and then (seeing that it is absurd to go on *in infinitum* in this manner) to conclude that, whether he can comprehend it or not, there *must* be some *uncaused intelligent Being*, the original and designing cause of all other Beings. For otherwise, what we *see* and *experience* could not have existed. It is true that we cannot conceive *how* this should be, but we are able to acquiesce in this ignorance, because there is no *contradiction* in it.

He says, p. 19, "Motion, in many in-"stances from gravity, from elasticity, from "electricity, begins in matter without any "known voluntary agent; and to suppose "always in these cases an unknown volun-"tary agent, is mere hypothesis, and hypo-"thesis attended with no advantage." He

alſo ſays, p. 118, "Why may not motion "have been propagated by impulſe through "all eternity?"

I will admit that the powers of gravity, elaſticity, and electricity, might have been in bodies from all eternity, without any ſuperior cauſe, if the bodies in which we find them were capable of knowing that they had ſuch powers, of that *deſign* which has proportioned them to one another, and of combining them in the wonderful and uſeful manner in which they are actually proportioned and combined in nature. But when I ſee that they are as evidently incapable of this as I am of properly producing a plant or an animal, I am under a neceſſity of looking for a higher cauſe; and I cannot reſt till I come to a Being *eſſentially different* from all viſible Beings whatever, ſo as not to be in the predicament that they are in, of requiring a ſuperior cauſe. Alſo, if motion could have been in the univerſe without any cauſe, it muſt have been in conſequence of bodies being poſſeſſed of the power of *gravity*, &c. from eternity, without a cauſe.

But as they could not have had thoſe powers without communication from a ſuperior and intelligent Being, capable of proportioning them, in the exact and uſeful manner in which they are poſſeſſed, the thing is manifeſtly *impoſſible*.

What Mr. Hume ſays with reſpect to the *origin of the world* in the following paragraph, which I think unworthy of a philoſopher, and miſerably trifling on ſo ſerious a ſubject, goes intirely upon the idea of the ſupreme cauſe reſembling ſuch beings as do themſelves require a ſuperior cauſe, and not (which, however, *muſt* be the caſe) a Being that can have no ſuperior in wiſdom or power. I, therefore, think it requires no particular animadverſion.

"Many worlds," he ſays, p. 106, "might "have been botched and bungled through-"out an eternity ere this ſyſtem was ſtruck "out, much labour loſt, many fruitleſs "trials made, and a ſlow, but continued "improvement, carried on during infinite "ages in the art of world making."

"A man who follows your hypotheſis," p. 111, "is able perhaps to aſſert, or con-"jecture, that the univerſe ſome time aroſe "from ſomething like deſign; but beyond "that poſition he cannot aſcertain one ſingle "circumſtance, and is left afterwards to fix "every point of his theology by the utmoſt "licence of fancy and hypotheſis. This "world, for ought we know, is very faulty "and imperfect, compared to a ſuperior "ſtandard, and was only the firſt rude eſſay "of ſome infant deity, who afterwards aban-"doned it, aſhamed of his own performance. "It is the work only of ſome dependent "inferior deity, and is the object of deri-"ſion to his ſuperiors. It is the produc-"tion of old age and dotage, in ſome ſuper-"annuated deity, and ever ſince his death "has run on at adventures, from the firſt "impulſe and active force, which it re-"ceived from him."

In reading *Mr. Hume's life*, written by himſelf, one might be ſurpriſed to find no mention of a *God*, or of a *providence*, which conducted him through it; but this cannot be

be any longer wonderful, when we find that, for any thing he certainly believed to the contrary, he himſelf might be the moſt conſiderable Being in the univerſe. His maker, if he had any, might have been either a careleſs playful infant, a trifling forgetful dotard, or was, perhaps, dead and buried, without leaving any other to take care of his affairs. All that he believed of his maker was, that he was capable of *ſomething like deſign*, but of his own comprehenſive intellectual powers he could have no doubt.

Neither can we think it at all extraordinary that Mr. Hume ſhould have recourſe to *amuſing books* in the laſt period of his life, when he conſidered the author of nature himſelf as never having had any ſerious object in view, and when he neither left any thing behind him, nor had any thing before him, that was deſerving of his care. How can it be ſuppoſed that the man, who ſcrupled not to ridicule his maker, ſhould conſider the human race, or the world, in any other light than as objects of ridicule, or pity. And well ſatisfied might he be to

have been ſo fortunate in his paſſage through the world, and in his eaſy eſcape out of it, when it was deſerted by its maker, and was continually expoſed to ſome unforeſeen and dreadful cataſtrophe. How poor a conſolation, however, muſt have been his *literary fame*, with ſuch gloomy proſpects as theſe!

What Mr. Hume ſays with reſpect to the deficiency in the proof of the *proper infinity* of the divine attributes, and of a probable *multiplicity of deities*, all goes on the ſame idea, viz. that the ultimate cauſe of the univerſe is ſuch a Being as muſt himſelf require a ſuperior cauſe; whereas, nothing can be more evident, how incomprehenſible ſoever it may be, than that the Being which has exiſted from eternity, and is the cauſe of all that does exiſt, muſt be one that *cannot* have a ſuperior, and therefore muſt be infinite in knowledge and power, and conſequently, as I have endeavoured to ſhew before, can be but *one*.

"As the cauſe," he ſays, p. 104, "ought "only to be proportioned to the effect, and "the effect, ſo far as it falls under our cog-

"nizance,

" nizance, is not infinite, what pretenſions " have we to aſcribe that attribute to the " Divine Being? —— By ſharing the work " among ſeveral we may ſo much farther " limit the attributes of each, and get rid " of that extenſive power and knowledge " which muſt be ſuppoſed in one deity."— This I think unworthy of a philoſopher on ſo grave and intereſting a ſubject.

It is owing to the ſame inattention to this one conſideration, that, in order to get rid of the idea of a ſupreme intelligent cauſe of all things, Mr. Hume urges the ſuperior probability of the univerſe reſembling a *plant*, or an *animal*. " If the univerſe," ſays he, p. 129, " bears a greater likeneſs to " animal bodies, and to vegetables, than to " the works of human art, it is more pro- " bable that its cauſe reſembles the cauſe of " the former than that of the latter; and " its origin ought rather to be aſcribed to " generation, or vegetation, than to reaſon " or deſign."

On this, Demea, the orthodox ſpeaker, very properly obſerves, p. 137, " Whence " could

"could ariſe ſo wonderful a faculty but "from deſign, or how can order ſpring from "any thing which perceives not that order "which it beſtows." In reply to which Philo contents himſelf with ſaying, ib. "A "tree beſtows order, and organization, on "that tree which ſprings from it, without "knowing the order; an animal, in the "ſame manner, on its offſpring," and p. 140, "Judging by our limited and imperfect ex-"perience, generation has ſome privileges "above reaſon; for we ſee every day the "latter to ariſe from the former, never the "former from the latter."

Manifeſtly unſatisfactory as this reply is, nothing is advanced in anſwer to it by either of the other diſputants. But it is obvious to remark, that, if an animal has marks of deſign in its conſtruction, a deſign which itſelf cannot comprehend, it is hardly poſſible for any perſon to imagine that it was originally produced without a power ſuperior to itſelf, and capable of comprehending its ſtructure, though he was not himſelf preſent at the original formation of it, and there-

therefore, could not ſee it. Can we poſſibly believe that any particular *horſe* that we know, originated without a ſuperior cauſe? equally impoſſible is it to believe, that the *ſpecies of horſes* ſhould have exiſted without a ſuperior cauſe.

How little then does it avail Mr. Hume to ſay, p. 135, that "reaſon, inſtinct, gene-"ration, vegetation, are ſimilar to each "other, and the cauſes of ſimilar effects;" as if *inſtinct*, *generation*, and *vegetation*, did not neceſſarily imply *deſign*, or reaſon, as the cauſe of them. He might with equal reaſon have placed other powers in nature, as *gravity*, *elaſticity*, &c. in the ſame rank with theſe; whereas all theſe muſt equally have proceeded from reaſon, or deſign, and could not have had any exiſtence independent of it. For deſign is conſpicuous in all thoſe powers, and eſpecially in the proportion and diſtribution of them.

Purſuing the analogy of plants and animals, he ſays, p. 152, "In like manner as a "tree ſheds its ſeeds into the neighbouring "fields, and produces other trees; ſo the "great

"great vegetable the world, or this pla-
"netary ſyſtem, produces within itſelf cer-
"tain ſeeds, which being ſcattered into the
"ſurrounding chaos, vegetate into new
"worlds. A comet, for inſtance, is the
"ſeed of a world, and after it has been fully
"ripened by paſſing from ſun to ſun, and
"ſtar to ſtar, it is at laſt toſſed into the un-
"formed elements, which every where ſur-
"round this univerſe, and immediately
"ſprouts up into a new ſyſtem."

"Or, if we ſhould ſuppoſe this world to
"be an *animal*, a comet is the *egg* of this
"animal; and in like manner as an oſtrich
"lays its egg in the ſand, which, without
"any farther care, hatches the egg, and pro-
"duces a new animal; ſo——Does not
"a plant or an animal," p. 134, "which
"ſprings from vegetation or generation, bear
"a ſtronger reſemblance to the world, than
"does any artificial machine, which ariſes
"from reaſon and deſign?"

Had any friend of religion advanced an idea ſo completely abſurd as this, what would not Mr. Hume have ſaid to turn it in-

to

to ridicule. With just as much probability might he have said that Glasgow grew from a seed yielded by Edinburgh, or that London and Edinburgh, marrying, by natural generation, produced York, which lies between them. With much more probability might he have said that *pamphlets* are the productions of large *books*, that *boats* are young *ships*, and that *pistols* will grow into great *guns*; and that either there never were any first towns, books, ships, or guns, or that, if there were, they had no makers.

How it could come into any man's head to imagine that a thing so complex as this world, consisting of land and water, earths and metals, plants and animals, &c. &c. &c. should produce a seed or egg, containing within it the elements of all its innumerable parts, is beyond my power of conception.

What must have been that man's knowledge of philosophy and nature, who could suppose for a moment, that a comet could possibly be the seed of a world? Do comets spring from worlds, carrying with them the seeds of all the plants, &c. that they contain?

tain? Do comets travel from sun to sun, or from star to star? By what force are they tossed into the *unformed elements*, which Mr. Hume supposes every where to surround the universe? What are those elements? and what evidence has he of their existence? or, supposing the comet to arrive among them, whence could arise its power of vegetating into a new system?

What Mr. Hume objects to the arguments for the *benevolence* of the Deity is such mere cavilling, and admits of such easy answers, that I am surprised that a man whose sole object was even *literary reputation* should have advanced it.

"The course of nature, p. 186, "tends "not to human or animal felicity, therefore "it is not established for that purpose." He might as well have said that *health* is not agreeable to the course of nature, as that enjoyment and *happiness* is not, since the one is the necessary consequence of the other. "It is contrary," he says, in fact, p. 193, "to every one's feeling and experience to "maintain a continued existence in this

"world

"world to be eligible and desirable. It is "contrary to an authority so established as "nothing can subvert." And yet almost all animals and all men *do* desire life, and, according to his own account, his own life was a singularly happy and enviable one.

"You must prove," p. 195, "these "pure unmixed and uncontrollable attri-"butes from the present mixed and confused "phenomena, and from these alone: a hope-"ful undertaking." If *evil* was not, in a thousand ways, necessarily connected with, and subservient to *good*, the undertaking would be hopeless, but not otherwise.

"It seems plainly possible," p. 205, "to "carry on the business of life without any "pain. Why then is any animal ever ren-"dered susceptible of such a sensation?" But pain, *as such*, we have seen to be excellently useful, as a guard against more pain, and greater evils, and also as an element of future happiness; and no man can pretend to say that the same end *could* have been attained by any other means.

"The

"The conduct of the world by general "laws," p. 206, "seems no wise necessary to "a very perfect being." But without general laws there could have been little or no room for *wisdom*, in God or man; and what kind of happiness could we have had without the exercise of our rational powers. To have had any *intellectual enjoyments* in those circumstances (and the sensual are of little value in comparison with them) we must have been Beings of quite another kind than we are at present, probably much inferior to what we are now.

"Almost all the moral as well as natural "evils of human life," p. 213, "arise from "*idleness*; and were our species, by the ori-"ginal constitution of their frame, exempt "from this vice, or infirmity, the perfect "cultivation of the land, the improvements "of arts and manufactures, the exact execu-"tion of every office and duty, immediately "follows, and men at once may fully reach "that state of society which is so imperfectly "attained by the best regulated government.

"But

"But as induſtry is a power, and the moſt "valuable of any, nature ſeems determined, "ſuitable to her uſual maxims, to beſtow it "on men with a very ſparing hand." And yet this writer can ſay, p. 259, that "no "ſtate of mind is ſo happy as the calm and "equable." But would not more induſtry, and *activity*, neceſſarily diſturb this calm and happy temperament, and be apt to produce quarrels, and, conſequently, more unhappineſs?

"I am ſceptic enough," he ſays, p. 219, "to allow that the bad appearances, not-"withſtanding all my reaſonings, may be "compatible with ſuch attributes as you "ſuppoſe; but ſurely they can never prove "ſuch attributes." But if preſent appearances prove *real benevolence*, I think they will go very near to prove *unbounded* benevolence, for reaſons that I have alleged before, and which I ſhall not repeat here.

It is pretty clear to me, that Mr. Hume was not ſufficiently acquainted with what has been already advanced by thoſe who have written on the ſubject of the being and attri-

butes of God. Otherwiſe he either would not have put ſuch weak arguments into the mouth of his favourite Philo, or would have put better anſwers into thoſe of his opponents. It was, I imagine, his diſlike of the ſubject that made him overlook ſuch writers, or give but little attention to them; and I think this conjecture concerning his averſion to the ſubject the better founded, from his ſaying, p. 259, that "there is a "gloom and melancholy remarkable in all "devout people."

No perſon really acquainted with true devotion, or thoſe who were poſſeſſed with it, could have entertained ſuch an opinion. What Mr. Hume had ſeen, muſt have been ſome miſerably low ſuperſtition, or wild enthuſiaſm, things very remote from the calm and ſedate, but chearful ſpirit of rational devotion.

Had he conſidered the nature of true devotion, he muſt have been ſenſible that the charge of gloom and melancholy can leaſt of all apply to it. Gloom and melancholy certainly belong to the ſyſtem of atheiſm, which

which entirely precludes the pleaſing ideas of a benevolent author of nature, and of a wiſe plan of providence, bringing good out of all the evil we experience; which cuts off the conſoling intercourſe with an inviſible, but omnipreſent and almighty protector and friend; which admits of no ſettled proviſion for our happineſs, even in this life, and cloſes the melancholy ſcene, ſuch as Mr. Hume himſelf deſcribes it, with a total annihilation.

Is it poſſible to draw a more gloomy and diſpiriting picture of the ſyſtem of the univerſe than Mr. Hume himſelf has drawn in his tenth dialogue? No melancholy religioniſt ever drew ſo dark a one. Nothing in the whole ſyſtem pleaſes him. He finds neither *wiſdom*, nor *benevolence*. Speaking on the ſuppoſition of God being omnipotent and omniſcient, he ſays, p. 185, "His "power we allow infinite; whatever he "wills is executed; but neither man nor "any other animal is happy; therefore he "does not will their happineſs. His wiſ-"dom is infinite; he is never miſtaken in

" chooſing the means to any end; but the " courſe of nature tends not to human or " animal felicity; therefore it is not eſta- " bliſhed for that purpoſe."

" Look round the univerſe," ſays he, p. 219, " what an immenſe profuſion of be- " ings, animated and organized, ſenſible and " active. You admire this prodigious va- " riety and fecundity. But inſpect a little " more narrowly theſe living exiſtences, the " only beings worth regarding. How hoſtile " and deſtructive to each other. How in- " ſufficient all of them for their own hap- " pineſs. How contemptible, or odious, to " the ſpectator. The whole preſents no- " thing but the idea of a blind nature, im- " pregnated by a great vivifying principle, " and pouring forth from her lap, without " diſcernment, or parental care, her maimed " and abortive children."

Compare this with the language of the pious writers of the ſcriptures. " Thou art " good and doeſt good. The Lord is good " to all, and his tender mercies are over all " his works. The earth is full of the good-

" neſs of the Lord. The eyes of all wait " upon thee, and thou giveſt them their " meat in due ſeaſon. Thou openeſt thine " hand, and ſatisfieſt the deſires of every " living thing. The Lord reigneth: let " the earth rejoice, let the inhabitants of " the iſles be glad thereof. Clouds and " darkneſs are round about him, righteouſ- " neſs and judgment are the habitation of " his throne."

In the ſcriptures the Divine Being is repreſented as " encouraging us to caſt all our " care upon him who careth for us." The true chriſtian is exhorted to *rejoice evermore*, and eſpecially to *rejoice in tribulation*, and perſecution for righteouſneſs ſake. Death is ſo far from being a frightful and diſguſting thing, that he triumphs in it, and over it. *O death, where is thy ſting? O grave, where is thy victory?*

Would any perſon heſitate about chuſing to *feel* as theſe writers felt, or as Mr. Hume muſt have done. With his views of things, the calmneſs and compoſure with which, he ſays, he faced death, though infinitely ſhort of the *joyful expectation* of the chriſtian, could

not have been any thing but affectation. If, however, with his proſpects he really was as calm, placid, and chearful, as he pretends, with little reaſon can he charge any ſet of *ſpeculative principles* with a tendency to produce gloom and melancholy. If *his* ſyſtem did not produce this diſpoſition, it never can be in the power of *ſyſtem* to do it.

Notwithſtanding I have differed ſo much from Mr. Hume with reſpect to the principles of his treatiſe, we ſhall, in words, at leaſt, agree in our concluſion. For though I think the being of a God, and his general benevolence and providence, to be ſufficiently demonſtrable, yet ſo many cavils may be ſtarted on the ſubject, and ſo much ſtill remains, that a rational creature muſt wiſh to be informed of concerning his maker, his duty here, and his expectations hereafter, that what Mr. Hume ſaid by way of cover and irony, I can ſay with great ſerioufneſs, and I do not wiſh to ſay it much otherwiſe, or better.

"The moſt natural ſentiment," he ſays, p. 363, "which a well-diſpoſed mind will "feel on this occaſion, is a longing deſire

"and

" and expectation, that heaven would be " pleaſed to diſſipate, at leaſt alleviate, this " profound ignorance, by affording ſome " more particular revelation to mankind, " and making diſcoveries of the nature, at- " tributes, and operation of the divine ob- " ject of our faith. A perſon ſeaſoned with " a juſt ſenſe of the imperfection of natural " reaſon will fly to *revealed truth* with the " greateſt avidity. To be a philoſophical " ſceptic is, in a man of letters, the firſt and " moſt eſſential ſtep towards being a ſound " believing chriſtian."

I am, &c.

LETTER X.

An Examination of Mr. Hume's Eſſay on a particular Providence, and a Future State.

DEAR SIR,

YOU tell me you have been a good deal ſtaggered with the eleventh of Mr. Hume's *Philoſophical Eſſays*, on a *particular*

providence, and a *future ſtate*, thinking his reaſoning, if not concluſive, yet ſo plauſible, as to be well entitled to a particular reply. I ſhall, therefore, give it as much conſideration as I flatter myſelf, after what I have already advanced on the ſame ſubject, you will think ſufficient.

In the character of an Epicurean philoſopher, addreſſing an Athenian audience, he ſays, p. 216, "Allowing the gods to be the "authors of the exiſtence, or order, of the "univerſe, it follows, that they poſſeſs that "preciſe degree of power, intelligence, and "benevolence, which appear in their work-"manſhip. But nothing farther can be "proved, except we call in the aſſiſtance of "exaggeration and flattery, to ſupply the "place of argument and reaſon." He farther ſays, p. 223, "You have no reaſon to "give diſtributive juſtice any particular ex-"tent, but only ſo far as you ſee it at pre-"ſent extend itſelf."

This is the ſum of his argument, which he has only repeated in his poſthumous Dialogues, and the reaſoning of which you will find

find obviated in the preceding Letters. He himself makes a friend, whom he introduces as discussing the question with him, reply to it, that intelligence once proved, from our own experience and observation, we are necessarily carried beyond what we have observed, to such unseen consequences, as we naturally expect from such intelligence, in similar cases.

"If you saw," says he, p. 225, "a half "finished building, surrounded with heaps "of bricks, and stones, and mortar, and all "the instruments of masonry, could you "not infer from the effect, that it was a "work of design and contrivance, and could "you not return again from this inferred "cause, to infer new additions to the effect, "and conclude that the building would "soon be finished, and receive all the far-"ther improvements that art could bestow "upon it? Why then do you refuse to "admit the same mode of reasoning with "regard to the order of nature? &c."

This reply appears to me to be satisfactory. But Mr. Hume refuses to acquiesce in

in it, on account of a ſuppoſed total *diſſimilarity* between the Divine Being and other intelligent agents, and of our more perfect knowledge of man than of God. The ſubſtance of his anſwer is, that we know man from various of his productions, and, therefore, from this experience of his conduct, can foretel what will be the reſult of thoſe of his works of which we ſee only a part. "Whereas the deity," he ſays, p. 227, "is "known to us only by his productions, and "is a ſingle Being in the univerſe, not com-"prehended under any ſpecies or genus, "from whoſe experienced attributes or qua-"lities we can, by analogy, infer any attri-"bute or quality in him. As the univerſe "ſhews wiſdom and goodneſs, we infer "wiſdom and goodneſs. As it ſhews a "particular degree of theſe perfections, we "infer a particular degree of them, preciſely "adapted to the effects we examine. But "farther attributes, and farther degrees of "the ſame attributes, we can never be au-"thoriſed to infer, or ſuppoſe, by any rules "of juſt reaſoning." He therefore ſays,

p. 230,

p. 230, "No new fact can be inferred from "the religious hypotheſis, no event foreſeen "or foretold, no reward or puniſhment ex- "pected or dreaded, beyond what is already "known by practice and obſervation."

But if the deity be an intelligent and deſigning cauſe (of which the univerſe furniſhes abundant evidence) he is not, in Mr. Hume's ſenſe, an *unique*, of a genus or ſpecies by himſelf; but is to be placed in the general *claſs* of *intelligent and deſigning agents*, though infinitely ſuperior to all others of that kind; ſo that, by Mr. Hume's own conceſſion, we are not without ſome *clue* to guide us in our inquiries concerning the probable tendencies and iſſues of what we ſee.

Beſides, admitting the deity to be an *unique* with reſpect to intelligence, it is not with *one* of his productions only that we are acquainted. We ſee innumerable of them; and as far as our experience goes, we ſee that all of them advance to ſome ſtate of perfection. Properly ſpeaking, nothing is left *unfiniſhed*. It is true that particular plants,

plants and animals periſh before they arrive at this ſtate, but this is not the caſe with the *ſpecies*; and all individuals periſh in conſequence of ſome *general laws*, calculated for the good of the whole ſpecies, that is, of the greater part of the individuals of which it conſiſts. Conſequently, without regard to the productions of other intelligent agents, we are not deſtitute of *analogies*, from which to infer a future better ſtate of things, in which there may be a fuller diſplay of the divine attributes, both of juſtice and benevolence.

On the whole, therefore, if we ſee things to be in a progreſs to a better ſtate, we may reaſonably conclude that the melioration will continue to proceed, and, either equably or accelerated, as we have hitherto obſerved it. Whatever be the *final object* of a work of deſign, yet, from what we know of ſuch works, we can generally form a tolerable gueſs whether they be *finiſhed* or *unfiniſhed*, and whether any ſcheme be near its beginning, its middle, or its termination. We are, therefore, by no means precluded from

all

all reaſoning concerning a future ſtate of things by the conſideration of the infinite ſuperiority of the author of the ſyſtem of the univerſe to all other intelligent beings. Notwithſtanding his ſuperiority to any of them, he may be ſaid to be *one of them*, and, without any information from the ſcriptures, we might have diſcovered that in this ſenſe, at leaſt, *in the image of God has he made man*. Or, though God ſhould not be conſidered as of the ſame claſs with any of his creatures, his productions, having the ſame author, ſupply abundance of analogies among themſelves.

In the ſame manner, the benevolence of the deity (which, in this place, Mr. Hume does not deny, but ſuppoſe) being ſimply admitted, we are at liberty to reaſon concerning it, as well as concerning the benevolence of any other Being whatever. And therefore if, in any nearly parallel caſe, we can ſee no reaſon why benevolence ſhould be limited, or why a *leſs* and not a *greater* degree of good ſhould be intended, it muſt appear probable to us, that the greateſt is intended;

intended; though, for ſufficient, but unknown reaſons, it cannot take place at preſent. Juſt as, if we are once ſatisfied that any particular *parent* has a juſt affection for his child, we conclude that, though he does not put him into immediate poſſeſſion of every thing that he has in his power to beſtow upon him, it is becauſe he is perſuaded that, for the preſent, it would not be for his advantage; but that, in due time (of which we alſo naturally preſume the parent himſelf to be the beſt judge) he will do much more for him, even all that his knowledge and ability can enable him to do. And though we may preſume envy and jealouſy to prevent this in natural parents, we cannot poſſibly ſuppoſe any thing of this kind to affect the *univerſal parent*, becauſe we cannot imagine any interference of intereſt between this parent and his offspring.

We always argue in the ſame manner concerning the conduct of a *governor*. If we are once fully ſatisfied with reſpect to his *love of juſtice*, and have alſo no doubt of his *wiſdom* and *power*, we immediately conclude,

clude, that every incorrigible criminal in his dominions will be properly puniſhed; and though, for the preſent, many criminals walk at large, we conclude that their conduct is duly attended to, and that their future treatment will be made to correſpond to it.

In like manner, if the preſent ſtate of things bear the aſpect of a ſcene of *diſtributive juſtice*, it may reaſonably be conſidered as only the beginning of a ſcheme of more exact and impartial adminiſtration; ſo that, in due time, virtue will be more adequately rewarded, and vice more exemplarily puniſhed, than we now ſee it to be. Every thing, therefore, that I have advanced on this ſubject in the preceding *Letters* may be perfectly well founded, notwithſtanding this particular objection of Mr. Hume, and notwithſtanding the great ſtreſs he lays upon it, both in this work, and in his *poſthumous Dialogues*.

I am,

Dear Sir, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XI.

Of the SYSTEME DE LA NATURE.

DEAR SIR,

IT would be tireſome to you, as well as irkſome to myſelf, to go over *all* the atheiſtical writers that have been admired in their time, but there is one work much more celebrated abroad than that of Mr. Hume will probably ever be with us, that you wiſh me not to paſs unnoticed. This is the *Syſteme de la Nature*.

After what I have already obſerved in my ſix firſt letters, and my animadverſions on Mr. Hume's Dialogues, &c. it will hardly be in my power to ſelect any thing from this work that I have not noticed already. However, as this performance is conſidered by many perſons as a kind of *bible of atheiſm*, and the manner in which it is written, though far from being cloſely argumentative, is often excellent in the mode of *declamation*,

mation, and the writer is much more bold and unreſerved than Mr. Hume, I ſhall make ſuch extracts as I am confident you will acknowledge contain the eſſence of his argument, and will be, at the ſame time, a pretty juſt ſpecimen of the compoſition of the whole, with ſhort remarks.

This writer admits of nothing but what is the object of our ſenſes, and, in the common ſenſe of the word, *material*; and concerning the origin of matter, and all the preſent laws of it, he expreſſes himſelf as follows:

"If we aſk whence came matter," p. 29, "we ſay it has exiſted always. If we be "aſked whence came motion in matter; we "anſwer that, for the ſame reaſon, it muſt "have been in motion from all eternity; "ſince motion is a neceſſary conſequence "of its exiſtence, of its eſſence, and its pri-"mitive properties, ſuch as extenſion, gra-"vity, impenetrability, figure, &c.—Theſe "elements," p. 32, "which we never find "perfectly pure, being continually in action "on one another, always acting and re-"acting, always combining and ſeparating,

" attracting and repelling, are ſufficient to " explain the formation of all the Beings " that we ſee. They are alternately cauſes " and effects; and thus form a vaſt circle " of generations and deſtructions, combina- " tions and decompoſitions, which never " could have had any beginning, and can " never have an end. To go higher," p. 32, 33, " for the principle of action in " matter, and the origin of things, is only " removing the difficulty, and wholly with- " drawing it from the examination of our " ſenſes."

I will acknowledge with this writer, that matter cannot exiſt without *powers*, as thoſe of attraction, repulſion, &c. more or leſs modified, as in the form of gravity, elaſticity, electricity, &c. for take away all the powers, that is, all the *properties* of matter, and the *ſubſtance* itſelf vaniſhes from our idea. Conſequently, if matter has been from eternity, theſe powers, and the motions which are the effects of them, muſt alſo have been from eternity. But then, in the *adjuſtment* of theſe various powers, and, conſequently,

conſequently, in *imparting* them, there muſt evidently have been a knowledge, comprehenſion, and foreſight, of which the bodies poſſeſſing, and ſubject to, thoſe laws are altogether incapable. I therefore conclude with certainty, that a Being ſuperior to every thing that is the object of our ſenſes, muſt have imparted thoſe powers and have adjuſted them to their proper uſes; that is, that he muſt have *created matter itſelf*, which could have no exiſtence without its powers. I am unable to account for what is *viſible* without having recourſe to a power that is *inviſible*; and this inviſible power I diſtinguiſh by the name of GOD.

"What does the word God," ſays he, vol. 2. p. 191, "mean, but the impene-"trable cauſe of the effects which aſtoniſh "us, and which we cannot explain. In "this God," vol. 2. p. 109, "nothing is "found but a vain phantom, ſubſtituted for "*the energy of nature*, which men are always "determined to miſtake. Men have filled "nature with ſpirits," p. 110, "becauſe "they have been almoſt always ignorant of

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" true cauſes. For want of knowing the " force of nature, they have thought it to " be animated by a great ſpirit. For want " of knowing the energy of the human " machine, they have ſuppoſed *that*, in like " manner, to be animated by a ſpirit; ſo " that we ſee the word *ſpirit* means nothing " but the unknown cauſe of the pheno- " mena that we cannot explain in a na- " tural manner."

To this I can only ſay that, if nothing that is viſible *can* account for what I ſee, I muſt neceſſarily have recourſe to ſomething that is inviſible. Juſt as if I hear a voice which, I am convinced, does not proceed from any thing in the room in which I am, I cannot help aſcribing it to ſome cauſe without the room, unleſs I could believe that ſuch a thing as *ſound* could originate without any cauſe at all. Now men, animals, plants, and even metals and ſtones, are things that we can no more ſuppoſe to have exiſted without a cauſe, than a mere ſound.

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I am not ſolicitous about the term *ſpirit*, but I muſt have ſome name by which to diſtinguiſh that to which I aſcribe ſuch *powers* as cannot belong to any thing that I am able to ſee. A human body may be, and probably is, the ſeat of all the powers that are exerted by man; but there is in the conſtitution of man (of whatever materials he may conſiſt) marks of a deſign and intelligence infinitely ſuperior to any thing that is found in man. He, therefore, *muſt* have ſome ſuperior cauſe, and ſo muſt every thing elſe that, like man, is finite. Proceeding in this manner, we muſt come at laſt to a being whoſe intelligence is properly *infinite*, and then (beſides that we are under a *neceſſity* of reſting there) it ceaſes to be in the predicament of a man, or a plant, which muſt neceſſarily be dependent upon ſomething ſuperior to themſelves; though, for that very reaſon, it ceaſes to be the object of our conceptions.

It is not properly our ignorance of the energy and ſecret powers of nature, that is, of what is viſible in nature, that makes us

aſcribe them to ſomething that we call a ſpirit, but rather a perfect comprehenſion and knowledge, that ſuch beings as we ſee could not have exiſted without ſome ſuperior cauſe diſtinct from themſelves. This writer might juſt as well ſay, that it is becauſe I am ignorant of the ſecret energy of nature, that I enquire for the cauſe of a ſound that I hear, or of a watch that I meet with.

It is true that, becauſe men cannot account for the power of thinking in themſelves, they have had recourſe to an inviſible ſpirit, and likewiſe becauſe they cannot account for the order of the univerſe, they have recourſe to another, but greater, inviſible ſpirit. So far the two caſes reſemble each other; but, in fact, they are very different. I diſcover the fallacy of the popular opinion concerning the ſuppoſed inviſible ſpirit called the *ſoul*, or the ſeat of perception and thought in man, when I conſider that all the phenomena of perception and thought, depend upon the organization of the brain, and that therefore, whatever

thoſe powers are, they *muſt*, according to the received rules of philoſophizing, be aſcribed to that organization. We are not to multiply cauſes without neceſſity. And when I reflect farther, I ſee that no difficulty is, in fact, removed by aſcribing the powers of perception and thought to an inviſible or immaterial ſpirit, becauſe there is no more perceivable connexion between what is *inviſible* than what is *viſible* and thoſe *powers*. It is true, that I have no diſtinct idea of *any* proper ſeat of thoſe mental powers, with what they can connect, or on what they may depend. But, for any thing that appears to the contrary, they may juſt as well connect with, and depend upon, the *brain*, as upon any inviſible ſubſtance within the brain.

But when I paſs from the immediate cauſe of thought in man to the cauſe of that cauſe, or the cauſe of this organization of the brain, I muſt neceſſarily look for it in ſomething that is at leaſt capable of underſtanding that organization; and this I know muſt be a Being of intelligence in-

finitely ſuperior to that of any *man*, and therefore, certainly very different from any thing human. For the ſame reaſon it is in vain that I look for this intelligence in the earth, the ſun, the moon, or the ſtars, or in all thoſe bodies combined.

There is, indeed, in the univerſe, that kind of *unity* which beſpeaks it to be *one work*, and, therefore, probably the work of one Being; but we by no means ſee that *continuity of ſubſtance*, which we find in the brain, ſo as to conclude from that analogy, that the parts of the viſible univerſe do themſelves conſtitute a thinking ſubſtance. What is viſible belonging to man *may*, for any thing we know to the contrary, be the ſeat of all his powers, and, therefore, according to the rules of philoſophizing, which teach us not to multiply cauſes or ſubſtances without neceſſity, *muſt be concluded* to be ſo. But what is viſible in the univerſe *cannot* be the ſeat of the intelligence that belongs to *it*, according to any analogy that we are acquainted with. Beſides, allowing, impoſſible as it muſt be, that ſo

disjointed

disjointed a ſyſtem as the material univerſe is, to have a *principle of thought* belonging to it, it has, however, ſo much the appearance of other works of deſign, that we muſt ſtill look out for *its* author, as much as for that of a man.

Concerning the origin of the human race, this writer ſays, p. 88, "The contemplator "of nature will ſee no contradiction in ſup- "poſing that the human race, ſuch as it is "at preſent, has either been produced in "time, or from all eternity.—But ſome re- "flections ſeem to give a greater probability "to the hypotheſis, that man is a produc- "tion in time, peculiar to the globe that "we inhabit; who conſequently, has no "higher origin than the globe itſelf, and "is a reſult from the particular laws that "govern it."

"To thoſe who, to cut the difficulty," p. 25, "pretend that the human race is de- "ſcended from a firſt man and firſt woman, "created by the divinity, we will ſay that "we have ſome idea of *nature*, but that we "have none of the *deity*, or of *creation*; and "that

"that to make uſe of theſe terms, is to "ſay, in other words, that we are ignorant "of *the energy of nature*, and that we do "not know *how* it has produced the men "that we ſee."

It is, I acknowledge, equally reaſonable to ſuppoſe the race of men to have exiſted from eternity without any ſuperior cauſe, as to have begun to exiſt in time without one; but yet the latter ſuppoſition, which this writer thinks the more probable of the two, by removing the origin of man out of the obſcurity of eternity, appears more glaringly abſurd, being more directly oppoſite to every thing that we obſerve or experience. Had we ever ſeen any thing come into being in this manner, we might conclude that man *might* have done ſo; but having no experience of any ſuch thing, and, on the contrary, ſeeing every man, animal, and plant, to be deſcended from pre-exiſtent parents; we neceſſarily conclude that every individual of the ſpecies muſt have come into being in this manner, till we come to the firſt of the ſpecies; and this firſt we ſee no

difficulty in ſuppoſing to have been formed by a Being of ſufficient power and ſkill. In the ſame manner, we trace back a number of *echoes*, or reverberations of ſound, to ſome thing that, without being itſelf a ſound, has a power of exciting it. But the primary cauſe of *man* can no more be a man, than the primary cauſe of a *ſound* can be a ſound.

As this writer aſcribes every thing that exiſts to the energy of *nature*, he ſeems ſometimes to annex the ſame ideas to that word, that others do to the word *God*; ſo that, from ſome paſſages in his work, one would imagine that he was an atheiſt in name only, and not in reality.

"We cannot doubt," ſays he, vol. 2. p. 165, "of the power of Nature to pro-"duce all the animals that we ſee, by the "help of combinations of matter, which "are in continual action. Nature," vol. 2. p. 167, "is not a work. It has always "ſubſiſted of itſelf. It is in its boſom that "every thing is made. We cannot deny," ib. p. 170, "but that nature is very power-"ful, and very induſtrious. Nature," ib. p. 173,

p. 173, "is not a blind cauſe. It does not "act at random. Nothing that it does "would appear *accidental* to him who "ſhould know its manner of acting; its re-"ſources, and ways. It is Nature," ib. p. 174, "that combines according to certain "and neceſſary laws, a head ſo organized as "to make a poem. It is Nature that gives a "brain proper to produce ſuch a work. "Nature," ib. p. 177, "does nothing but "what is neceſſary. It is not by acci-"dental combinations, and random throws, "that it produces the beings that we ſee. "Chance," ib. p. 178, "is nothing but a "word of imagination, like the word *God*, "to cover the ignorance we are under of "the acting cauſes in nature, whoſe ways "are often inexplicable."

If what this writer here calls *nature* be really capable of all that he aſcribes to it; if it be thus powerful and induſtrious, if it does nothing at random, and produces beings of ſuch intelligence as men, &c. it is indeed no bad ſubſtitute for a deity, but then it would be, in fact, only another

name

name for the ſame thing. It is the *powers*, not the *ſubſtance*, that we reverence; and a power like this, capable of producing men and animals, without pre-exiſtent parents, is a power not to be overlooked. I ſhould even think it capable of occaſioning as much ſuperſtitious dread as this writer imputes to the belief of a God. Alſo, if the powers of this nature favour virtue, as this writer ſtrongly contends, it might be even apprehended that, being capable of producing men at firſt, it might be capable of *re-producing* them after they had been dead and buried; ſo that an atheiſt who had been very wicked could not be quite ſure of eſcaping the puniſhment of his crimes even in the grave.

But, notwithſtanding all that this writer aſcribes to nature, and though it does not act at random, he imagines it has no intelligence or object; which I think is not a little paradoxical. "Nature," ſays he, vol. 2. p. 189, "has no intelligence or object. "It acts neceſſarily, becauſe it exiſts neceſ- "ſarily. It is we that have a neceſſary ob-

"ject, which is our own preſervation," p. 190. This writer, however, ſuppoſes man to act neceſſarily; ſo that merely acting *neceſſarily* is not incompatible with having an *object*. Conſequently, nature, though acting neceſſarily, *may*, according to his own mode of reaſoning, have an object; and that nature, or the author of nature, *has* had various objects, is juſt as evident as it is that man has objects. The power that formed an *eye* had as certainly ſomething in view, as he that conſtructed a *teleſcope*.

I am unable to purſue the inconſiſtencies of this celebrated writer any farther; and yet, taking the whole work together, it is the moſt plauſible and ſeducing of any thing that I have yet met with in ſupport of atheiſm; and the author is to be commended for writing in a frank and open manner, without the leaſt cover or reſerve, which is not the caſe with Mr. Hume.

I am,

Dear Sir, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XII.

An Examination of ſome fallacious Methods of demonſtrating the Being and Attributes of GOD.

DEAR SIR,

IT is, in ſome reſpects, to be regretted, that all the friends of religion do not agree in the principles on which they defend it; becauſe it gives their common adverſaries the advantage of various important conceſſions from ſome or other of them. This has, in fact, proceeded ſo far, that in the opinion of ſome theiſts, the principles of profeſſed atheiſts are not more dangerous than thoſe of their particular adverſaries, though equally declared theiſts with themſelves. Alſo, *human paſſions* interfering, the enemies of atheiſm are apt to diſpute with too much anger and rancour about their ſeveral modes of attack and defence,

and

and to repreſent thoſe who have the ſame ultimate object with themſelves, *as favourers of atheiſm*, though they may heſitate to call their principles directly *atheiſtical*.

But, on the other hand, this very circumſtance, though unfavourable in theſe reſpects, is not without ſome advantage; as different perſons may be impreſſed by different modes of reaſoning. And provided the great *moral purpoſe* be attained, which undoubtedly is an inward reverence for an inviſible Being, whom we conſider as the maker of us and of all things, who is our moral governor here, and will take cognizance of our conduct hereafter, the real friends of religion, and eſpecially thoſe of the moſt truly enlarged minds, will rejoice.

Nor do we need to be alarmed at any future diſcovery of the weakneſs of any principles of religion by thoſe who have built the moſt upon them. For if the ſuperſtructure itſelf be valued, a man will always look out for ſome better ſupports rather than let it fall altogether. There are few perſons of a ſpeculative

culative turn of mind but muſt have obſerved this in themſelves, with reſpect to various other valuable objects.

On how very different and oppoſite principles has the general doctrine of *morals* been founded, and how often have ſpeculative perſons changed their views of this ſeemingly momentous buſineſs; and yet it is not at all probable, that the *practice of morals* has ever ſuffered from this cauſe. On what different principles, alſo, have the civil and religious rights of men been founded, by perſons who have been equally ready to lay down their lives in defence of them, and who change their ſpeculative opinions without becoming advocates for ſlavery.

Why then ſhould any friend of religion be alarmed becauſe one perſon thinks that the being of God, and the great truths of natural religion, are to be proved in one way, and another perſon in a different way. If, as we muſt all acknowledge, it would be moſt injurious to call any perſon an atheiſt, merely becauſe he could not prove the being of a God at all, much more, certainly, muſt it

be injurious to call a perſon an atheiſt who does it ſatisfactorily to himſelf, though not ſo to us.

It is very rarely that thinking and ſpeculative perſons are convinced of any miſtake of conſequence, but let the confutation be ever ſo clear and undeniable, if the diſputant be a man of virtue, I ſhould not be apprehenſive that even principles the moſt indiſputably (yet, in fact, only *conſequentially*) atheiſtical, would ever make him an atheiſt.

What would become of the advocates of the doctrine of the *trinity*, if thoſe only ſhould be allowed to be trinitarians, who explained and defended it in the ſame manner. To ſay nothing of the general difference between ancient and modern times in that reſpect, few ſocieties, I apprehend, of that denomination of chriſtians at this day, would, on this principle, hold communion with each other.

In general, the truth of any particular propoſition may be ſo firmly aſſented to, and may be ſo intimately connected with numberleſs other tenets, that a man's *whole ſyſtem*

of

of opinions muſt give way before that one doctrine can be rooted out of his mind; and ſo total a revolution in the principles of men, who really think at all for themſelves, ſo ſeldom happens, that it is no reaſonable object of apprehenſion. It is happy for us that we are ſo conſtituted. Without this, we ſhould be in a ſtate of endleſs fluctuation; and it is almoſt better to have any principles, and any character, than no fixed principles, no proper character at all.

With reſpect to the ſubject of theſe Letters, I ſhall hope to derive this advantage from the diſcuſſion, that thoſe perſons who are atheiſtically inclined, and who have been confirmed in their diſbelief of the principles of religion by the injudicious manner in which ſome of its friends have defended it; may find their triumph premature; and that the ſyſtem of theiſm is not overturned, though they ſhould have ſucceeded in their refutation of ſome principles which have been *imagined* to be eſſential to it, and neceſſary ſupports of it.

With this calm, and I hope juſt view of the ſubject, I ſhall, in this Letter, endeavour to explain the fallacy of ſome of the ſpeculative principles on which real friends of religion have, at different times, endeavoured to ſupport the doctrines of a God and of a Providence. And, in doing this, I ſhall have no fear of increaſing, but, on the contrary, ſome hope of leſſening, the number of atheiſts.

1. I ſhall not detain you long with the opinion of thoſe who maintain that the belief of a God is an *inſtinctive principle*; becauſe I preſume it will, at this day, be generally acknowledged, that there is no evidence of *any* idea, or principle, being properly inſtinctive, or *innate*. We come into the world furniſhed with proper ſenſes to receive the various impreſſions to which we are expoſed; and the traces in the mind, left by thoſe impreſſions, appear to be the elements of all the ideas, and all the knowledge we ever acquire. Being then poſſeſſed of a natural capacity of acquiring to a certain degree every kind of valuable knowledge,

ledge, and the knowledge of God and of religion, as well as of other things, it is not agreeable to the analogy of nature to have the ſame things impreſſed upon us in another, and quite different manner.

Beſides, had the idea of God been originally impreſſed upon the minds of all men, the character would, no doubt, have been the ſame, and would not have been liable to ſo great variation, and perverſion, as we find it to have been. Nor could we imagine it could have been ſo nearly, if not intirely, effaced, as it appears to have been in ſome whole nations; if, indeed, it can be ſuppoſed poſſible, on that hypotheſis, for *any* perſon to have been an atheiſt.

This very unphiloſophical opinion, viz. that the belief of a God is an inſtinctive principle, not to be deduced by reaſoning from any appearances in nature, has, however, been aſſerted very lately, and every other mode of defending the primary truths of religion has been moſt arrogantly exploded, and ridiculed, by Dr. Beattie and Dr. Oſwald, on principles before advanced

by Dr. Reid; and yet of the good *intentions* of theſe writers, in this ſingular conduct, I never entertained a doubt, though ſuch abſurd principles, ſo haughtily advanced, and ſo weakly ſupported, in this enlightened age, deſerve, in my opinion, every other cenſure. See my *Examination of theſe writers*.

2. Deſcartes thought that the very *idea* of a God was a ſufficient proof of his exiſtence. This opinion, if defenſible at all, implies the former. For unleſs the idea of God be of ſuch a nature as that it could not have been acquired by any impreſſions to which we are expoſed, it muſt be impoſſible to ſay but that it may have been ſo formed. What is there in our idea of God but human perfections magnified; and what is our idea of *infinity* itſelf, but the mere negation of bounds?

3. There is another mode of reaſoning concerning the being of God, which, I believe, originated with Dr. Clark, and is, I imagine, peculiar to this country, but it does not appear ever to have given general ſatisfaction; though ſome very eminent

metaphyſicians are ſtill ſtrongly attached to it. To me, however, the fallacy of it ſeems very obvious.

According to this author, there muſt be a God, or an original deſigning cauſe of all things, becauſe it would be as much a contradiction to ſuppoſe the contrary, as to ſuppoſe that *two and two* are not equal to *four*. He alſo ſays, that the idea of God cannot be excluded from the mind, any more than the ideas of *ſpace* or *duration*, though we uſe every effort we can for that purpoſe.

Now a *contradiction* is ſaying and unſaying, affirming and denying a thing at the ſame time, or in the ſame ſentence; ſo that there is a manifeſt *contrariety*, or *incompatibility*, between thoſe ideas that are aſſerted to coincide; and this muſt appear without any reaſoning on the ſubject; juſt as if we ſhould ſay *white is black*, and yet retain the ideas uſually annexed to thoſe terms. We immediately perceive, without any reaſoning, that *black* cannot be *white*, or *white*, *black*. If we ſay that *two and two* are *five*, it is a contradiction, though in form one

ſtep ſhort of a *direct* one. To make it a direct contradiction, we ſhould firſt ſay that *two and two* are *four*, and then that *four* is *five*, which only is a direct, or proper contradiction.

Now where is the proper contradiction, direct or indirect, in ſaying *There is no God?* If we reduce it to a formal propoſition, it is, *The univerſe exiſts without a cauſe.* Now, falſe as the propoſition is, it is no more a contradiction (i. e. *in terms*, and there is no other proper contradiction) than to ſay that *God exiſts without a cauſe*, which is a truth. Becauſe neither is the idea annexed to the term *univerſe*, the direct reverſe of the idea annexed to the term *uncauſed*, nor does the idea annexed to the term *God* coincide with it.

As to the impoſſibility of excluding from our minds the idea of a deity, it is altogether an affair of *conſciouſneſs*; and with reſpect to myſelf, I have no ſcruple to ſay, that I find no difficulty at all in excluding the ideas of every thing in nature, except thoſe of *ſpace* and *duration*, and I cannot help being ſur-

prized

prized that the contrary ſhould ever have been aſſerted.

It is true that the belief of what actually exiſts compels us to the belief of a God, or an uncauſed Being, different from mere ſpace. But excluſive of the conſideration of *an exiſting univerſe*, from which I infer the belief of a God, as the neceſſary cauſe of it, there is nothing in the mere *idea* of a deity (as there evidently is in the idea of ſpace) that prevents a poſſibility of its being excluded from the mind. But it is proper that ſo reſpectable a writer as Dr. Clark ſhould be heard in his own words.

"The only true idea of a ſelf-exiſtent "or neceſſary exiſtent Being," *Demonſtration*, &c. p. 17, "is the idea of a Being, the "ſuppoſition of whoſe non-exiſting is an "expreſs contradiction.—The relation of "equality between *twice two* and *four* is an "abſolute neceſſity, only becauſe it is an "immediate contradiction in terms to ſup-"poſe them unequal. To uſe the word in "any other ſenſe," p. ib. "ſeems to be uſing "it without any ſignification at all.—If any

" one now aſk what ſort of idea, the idea of " that Being is, the ſuppoſition of whoſe " non-exiſting is thus an expreſs contra- " diction, I anſwer, it is the firſt and ſimpleſt " idea that we can poſſibly frame, or rather " which (unleſs we forbear thinking at all) " we cannot poſſibly extirpate, or remove " out of our minds, of a moſt ſimple Being, " abſolutely eternal, and infinite, original, " and independent."—Yet, as I have ſaid before, I cannot imagine any difficulty in excluding this idea. But he argues the ſame thing in a different manner.

" That he who ſuppoſes there may poſ- " ſibly be no eternal infinite Being in the " univerſe, ſuppoſes a contradiction, is evi- " dent from hence," p. 19; " that when he " has done his utmoſt in endeavouring to " imagine that no ſuch Being exiſts, he " cannot avoid imagining *an eternal and in-* " *finite nothing*; that is, he will imagine " eternity and immenſity removed out of " the univerſe, yet that, at the ſame time, " they ſtill continue there."

Here I think is a manifeſt fallacy. If, by an *eternal and infinite nothing*, he meant that nothing will be eternal and infinite but *ſpace*, it is *falſe*, but ſurely no *contradiction*; and though an eternal and infinite deity be removed, an eternal and infinite ſpace will not. If there be no reference to the idea of ſpace (which indeed is not mentioned) the inconcluſiveneſs of the argument is too obvious to have eſcaped the obſervation of any perſon.

I acknowledge, with Dr. Clark, that a finite being cannot be ſelf-exiſtent; but I do not feel the force of his reaſoning on the ſubject, becauſe it is the ſame with the preceding. "To ſuppoſe a finite Being," p. 47, "to be ſelf-exiſtent, is to ſay, that it "is a contradiction for that Being not to "exiſt, the abſence of which may yet be "conceived without a contradiction, which "is the greateſt abſurdity in the world." Here he takes it for granted, that the idea of the ſelf-exiſtence of any Being implies its being a contradiction for that Being not to exiſt.

But

But though Dr. Clark advances thus far *a priori*, that is without any reference to an *exiſting univerſe*, in proof of the being of a God, he does not pretend to prove the divine *intelligence* in this manner, nor yet his *power*. "That the ſelf-exiſtent being," p. 55, "is an *underſtanding*, and really *active* being, cannot be demonſtrated ſtrictly "and properly *a priori*, becauſe we know "not wherein *intelligence* conſiſts, nor can "we ſee an immediate and neceſſary con-"nexion of it with *ſelf-exiſtence*. The ſelf-"exiſtent Being, the ſupreme cauſe of all "things," p. 80, "muſt of neceſſity have "infinite power, becauſe all things in the "univerſe were made by him, and all the "powers of all things are derived from "him, and entirely dependent upon him."

But, what is more extraordinary, this writer thinks he can prove the *moral attributes of God* from his intelligence only. This, however, conſidering that he does not pretend to prove intelligence itſelf *a priori*, is not, ſtrictly ſpeaking, an argument *a priori*.

That

That the ſupreme cauſe of all things muſt of neceſſity be a Being of infinite goodneſs, juſtice, and truth, and all moral perfections, he proves from this conſideration, that a being of infinite intelligence muſt perceive thoſe *neceſſary fitneſſes of things*, on which, according to him, morality depends; and, "having no want of any thing, "his will cannot be influenced," p. 125, "by any wrong affection, and, therefore, "he muſt of neceſſity do always what he "knows to be fitteſt to be done, i. e. he "muſt always act according to the ſtricteſt "rules of infinite goodneſs, juſtice, and "truth, and all other moral perfections."

As the idea concerning the *foundation of morals*, on which this argument proceeds, is another ſubject of diſcuſſion, I ſhall not enter into it here, except juſt obſerving, that I perceive no neceſſary connexion between *intelligence*, as ſuch, and any particular *intention*, or *object*, whatever; and, therefore, nothing can prove actual *benevolence*, in preference to *malevolence*, but the actual production of *happineſs*, in preference

ference to *miſery*, or, at leaſt, a manifeſt tendency to it, in what is actually produced.

Dr. Clark's mode of reaſoning is not very different from that of Deſcartes, and others, who maintain that we can prove the exiſtence of a ſelf-exiſtent Being from the very *idea* we have of it. That the reader may ſee how he diſtinguiſhes in this caſe, I ſhall juſt recite what he ſays on the ſubject.

"I muſt have an idea of ſomething ac-
"tually exiſting without me," p. 22, "and
"I muſt ſee wherein conſiſts the abſolute
"impoſſibility of removing that idea, in
"conſequence of ſuppoſing the non-exiſt-
"ence of the thing, before I can be ſatiſ-
"fied, from that idea, that the thing ac-
"tually exiſts. The bare having an idea
"of the propoſition, *There is a ſelf-exiſtent*
"*Being*, proves, indeed, the thing not to be
"impoſſible (for of an impoſſible propoſi-
"tion there is properly no idea) but that it
"actually *is* cannot be proved from the
"idea, unleſs the certainty of the *actual*
"*exiſtence* of a neceſſarily exiſtent being

"follows

"follows from the *possibility* of the existence of such a being; which that it does, "in this particular case, many learned men "have indeed thought, and their subtle "arguings on this head are not, perhaps, "very easily to be disapproved. But it is "a much clearer and convincing way of "arguing, to demonstrate, that there does "actually exist without us a Being whose "existence is necessary of itself, by showing the manifest contradiction of the contrary supposition, and, at the same time, "the absolute impossibility of destroying "or removing some ideas, as of eternity and "immensity, which, therefore, must needs "be the attributes of a necessary being actually existing!"—

Since, however, *mere space*, as I have observed before, may easily be conceived to have existed *infinite* and *eternal*, without any thing to occupy it, it certainly cannot be necessary to suppose it the attribute of any other being. This is manifestly very unlike the case of *black*, *white*, *long*, *broad*, or other *mere properties*, which cannot be conceived

conceived without ſome *ſubject* to which they belong. The diſpute whether ſpace be a *ſubſtance*, or a *property*, is, in fact, merely, or little more than, verbal; becauſe we know nothing of any thing but its properties. But if *a capacity of ſubſiſting, in idea, by itſelf*, be a characteriſtic of *ſubſtance*, as oppoſed to *property*, ſpace, undoubtedly, ought to be denominated a ſubſtance, and not a mere property; though, when occupied by any other ſubſtance, it may aſſume the appearance of a property belonging to that ſubſtance. For, take away the ſubſtance, and the ſpace it occupied will not, in idea, go with it. Nay, in that ſenſe, it is more of the nature of ſubſtance than any thing elſe, becauſe it is impoſſible, even in idea, to ſuppoſe it not to be permanent.

If the whole of what Dr. Clark has advanced, on the proof of the being of a God, be attentively conſidered, it will not be very eaſy to ſay what his idea of God, as proved *a priori*, is. It is that of a Being ſelf-exiſtent, eternal, and co-extended with in-

finite

finite ſpace, but not ſpace It is the cauſe of all things, but without *power*, *intelligence*, or *moral attributes*; for theſe he makes to depend upon the perceived relation of things. Conſequently, they pre-ſuppoſe intelligence, which he acknowledges cannot be proved *a priori*.

In fact, therefore, he proves nothing *a priori* but *mere being*, without any proper *powers* whatever. But the terms, *being* or *ſubſtance*, give no ideas at all, when diveſted of powers or properties. So that, in reality, notwithſtanding his aſſertion of the contrary, it is nothing but *empty ſpace* that he is capable of proving *a priori*. And, with reſpect to this, I perfectly agree with him; becauſe, do what we will, we cannot ſo much as *ſuppoſe* infinite and eternal ſpace not to have exiſted.

Far, however, am I from ſaying that a deity, an *efficient deity*, with all his attributes, is not, properly ſpeaking, *neceſſarily exiſtent*; or that his exiſtence is not, in reality, as neceſſary as that of ſpace itſelf. But then we come to the knowledge of this

neceſſity, with reſpect to him, in a different manner. It is by beginning *a poſteriori*, finding that, in conſequence of the *actual exiſtence* of Beings that muſt have had a cauſe, there muſt have been ſome Being that could not have had a cauſe, though we are altogether at a loſs to conceive, *a priori*, *how*, or *why*, he ſhould exiſt without a cauſe, and can in idea eaſily imagine him not to have exiſted, which is not the caſe with reſpect to ſpace. Then, the neceſſary exiſtence of a ſupreme cauſe once ſuppoſed, there are various attributes, as thoſe of *eternity*, *immenſity*, and *unity*, that may either with certainty, or with the greateſt probability, be deduced from the conſideration of *neceſſary exiſtence*.

But though to us, and our conceptions, there be this difference between the idea of the exiſtence of ſpace, and of that of the deity, there may not be any in reality. Indeed, the deity could not have been *neceſſarily exiſtent*, if there had not been, in the nature of things, if we may uſe the phraſe (which, however, can only be improperly applied

applied in this caſe) as much reaſon for his exiſtence, as for that of ſpace. But neither the term *reaſon*, nor any thing equivalent to it, ought, in ſtrictneſs, to be uſed in this caſe, leſt it ſhould imply, contrary to the ſuppoſition, that there is ſome proper *cauſe* of the divine exiſtence, whereas he cannot have had any cauſe.

On this account, I diſlike the phraſeology of Dr. Clark, when he ſometimes ſpeaks of *neceſſity being the cauſe of the divine exiſtence*. Indeed the whole of our language is ſo appropriated to *finite* and *cauſed* beings, that it is hardly poſſible to uſe any part of it in ſpeaking with ſtrict propriety of a being *infinite* and *uncauſed*. We ſhould, therefore, forgive one another any overſights of this nature that we inadvertently fall into.

I am,

Dear Sir, &c.

LETTER XIII.

Of the Ideas of CAUSE *and* EFFECT, *and the Influence of Mr. Hume's Opinion on this Subject in the Argument for the Being of a* GOD.

DEAR SIR,

AS ſome perſons have imagined that the cauſe of atheiſm has derived conſiderable advantage from Mr. Hume's ideas concerning the nature of *cauſe and effect*, I ſhall, in this letter, endeavour to ſhew that the apprehenſion is without foundation.

Mr. Hume ſays, that all we can pretend to know concerning the connexion of cauſe and effect, is their conſtant *conjunction*; by the obſervance of which the mind is neceſſarily led from the one to the other. From this the friends of religion have ſuppoſed that, if this repreſentation be juſt, the connexion is merely *arbitrary*, and, therefore, that

that ſuch things as we have uſually called *effects* may take place without any thing that we have uſually obſerved to correſpond to them, as their *cauſes*. Conſequently, that, for any thing that we know to the contrary, the univerſe itſelf may have exiſted from eternity without any ſuperior cauſe.

To guard againſt this, ſome of the friends of religion deny that our idea of *power* or *cauſation* is derived from any thing that we properly obſerve. But, imperfect as Mr. Hume's ideas on the ſubject are (notwithſtanding his laborious and tireſome diſcuſſion of it, and its being evidently a favourite topic with him) I think I have ſufficiently ſhewn, in the third of the *Eſſays* prefixed to my Edition of *Hartley's Theory of the Mind*, that there is nothing in the idea of *power*, or *cauſation* (which is only the ſame idea differently modified) that is not derived from the impreſſions to which we have been ſubject, this being to be ranked in the claſs of *abſtract ideas*, where it does not appear that Mr. Hume ever thought

of looking for it. In the Eſſay I here refer to, p. 36, I have ſhewn that the idea of *power*, is far from being, what ſome take it to be, a ſimple idea, but that, on the contrary, it is one of the moſt complex ideas that we have, conſiſting of what is common to numberleſs impreſſions of very different kinds.

Beſides, if the idea of power be any thing that cannot be acquired by *experience*, it comes under the deſcription of other *innate principles*, or *ideas*, which have been ſo long, and, I think, ſo juſtly exploded, that I think myſelf at liberty to take it for granted that there is no ſuch thing.

But I ſhall proceed to obſerve that, in whatever manner we come by the idea of power or cauſation, it is an idea that all men have, and correſponds to ſomething *real* in the relation of the things that ſuggeſt it. It is true, that all we properly *ſee* of a *magnet*, and a *piece of iron*, is that, at certain diſtances they approach to one another, and of a *ſtone*, that, in certain circumſtances, it invariably tends towards the earth;

earth; and we cannot give any proper, or ſatisfactory *reaſon* why either of theſe effects ſhould take place in theſe circumſtances. Yet we have always found that, in a ſimilar conſtant conjunction of appearances, we have never failed to diſcover, whenever we have been able to make any diſcovery at all, that the event could not have been otherwiſe. And though, in theſe caſes, we have only diſcovered a *nearer*, and never *the ultimate* cauſe of any appearance, yet there is an invariable experience in favour of *ſome* real and ſufficient cauſe in all ſuch conjunctions.

In conſequence of this experience, it is indelibly impreſſed upon the minds of all men, that all events whatever, and all productions whatever, muſt have a neceſſary and adequate cauſe; ſo that "nothing can "begin to be without a cauſe foreign to "itſelf."

And let any perſon pretend what he will, he muſt himſelf (in conſequence of the impreſſions to which he, together with the reſt of mankind, has uniformly been

expoſed) have come under the influence of it, and of courſe have the ſame perſuaſion.

Though, therefore, by means of ſome ſecret bias, and ſophiſtical argumentation, a man may come to be perſuaded that the univerſe has had no ſuperior cauſe, he cannot deny but that all other things (which the theiſt muſt ſhow to be in the ſame predicament with the univerſe) muſt have had ſuch a cauſe; ſo that nothing is to be apprehended from his idea of *the nature of cauſation in general*. What ever that idea be (and, in fact, it will be the ſame with that of the reſt of mankind, let any perſon give whatever account of it he pleaſes) he will neceſſarily expect a ſuperior cauſe in thoſe circumſtances in which mankind in general will be ſatisfied that a cauſe is requiſite.

Different perſons *feel*, and are *perſuaded*, differently enough in ſome caſes; but where the influences to which their minds have been ſubject have neceſſarily been nearly the ſame, the impreſſions made on them cannot

cannot be materially different. In this caſe, I ſhould ſooner imagine that the ideas annexed to the words *hunger* and *thirſt* ſhould be different in different perſons, than the ideas annexed to the words *power* and *cauſation*, or that they ſhould have different effects in their ſerious argumentations.

I am,

Dear Sir, &c.

LETTER XIV.

An Examination of Mr. Hume's Metaphyſical Writings.

DEAR SIR,

YOU are ſurprized, you tell me, that Mr. Hume, ſo great a maſter of reaſoning, ſo cool and diſpaſſionate a writer, and ſo ſubtle a metaphyſician, ſhould have written ſo looſely and unguardedly, as you are

are now convinced he has done in this *poſthumous work* of his; a work of which, it is evident, he made great account, by his taking ſuch effectual meaſures for its publication after his death. But you cannot well ſuppoſe, having always entertained a different idea, that I can be ſufficiently well-founded in the cenſure I have paſſed on his *metaphyſical writings in general*, in my ninth Letter, and, therefore, you wiſh I would enter on the proof of what I have advanced, by a diſtinct exhibition of *all* that Mr. Hume has done in this way; that when all the obſervations he has advanced ſhall be ſeen without the impoſition of his ſtyle and manner, its real merit, its ſolidity or futility, may plainly appear.

Now I am ready to give you the fulleſt ſatisfaction on this ſubject; and I ſhould not have ventured to throw out that *general cenſure*, without being prepared to juſtify it in all the particulars, if you ſhould call upon me to do it. Beſides, I am not without hopes, that when you ſee on how narrow a foundation Mr. Hume's fame as a meta-

phyſician ſtands, his authority as a *reaſoner* will not weigh ſo much as it has hitherto done, with you and others who have only a general and indiſtinct notion of his being a *great philoſopher*, and an acute and guarded writer. This I ſhall do in as ſuccinct a manner as I can, in a regular analyſis of all his *Eſſays* that are in the leaſt to our preſent purpoſe.

In the firſt of his *Philoſophical Eſſays*, on *the different ſpecies of philoſophy*, which is only an introduction to the reſt, it appears that he had no idea of the connexion of the different faculties of the mind, and their dependence upon one principle, as that of *aſſociation*. For he ſays, p. 11, "The mind "is endued with ſeveral powers and facul- "ties; and theſe powers are totally diſtinct "from each other; but" p. 15, "We may "hope that philoſophy may carry its re- "ſearches farther, and diſcover at leaſt, in "ſome degree, the ſecret ſprings and prin- "ciples by which the human mind is actu- "ated in its operations." He ſays, how- ever, "it is probable that one operation and

"principle

"principle of the mind depends on another, "which again may be reſolved into one "more general and univerſal." What that principle is, it is evident Mr. Hume had no idea.

In his ſecond Eſſay, on *the origin of our ideas*, I find nothing that could have been *new*, but an ill-founded ſuſpicion, "that "ſimple ideas are not, in every inſtance, de-"rived from correſponding impreſſions," merely becauſe, having had ideas from actual impreſſion of the extremes of any particular *colour*, we are able, without any farther aſſiſtance from actual impreſſions, to raiſe the idea of the intermediate ſhades of the ſame colour; not conſidering that this amounts to nothing more than a difference of *greater* or *leſs*, and, therefore, is not properly any new idea at all. It is no more than forming an idea of a middle ſized hill, after having ſeen ſmall hillocks, and large mountains.

Let a tender eye be ſtrongly impreſſed with a luminous object, of white, or any other colour, and if the eye be immediately

ſhut,

ſhut, the impreſſion will, of itſelf, change into various other colours, as well as ſhades of the ſame colour; and there can be no doubt but that this would have been the caſe originally, though no ſuch colours had been known before. Now the ſubſtance of the brain being the ſame with that of the retina, and of the other nerves, it muſt be capable of ſuch changes of affection as theſe, from cauſes within itſelf; but ſtill the neceſſary conſequence of external impreſſions.

In the third Eſſay he reduces all the caſes of the connexion, or aſſociation, of ideas to three, viz. *reſemblance*, *contiguity* in place or time, and *cauſe and effect*, without attempting at a conjecture how ideas thus related to each other come to be aſſociated, or what circumſtances they have in common; though it was ſo eaſy to perceive that, in all of them, the immediate cauſe is nothing more or leſs than *joint impreſſion*; the univerſal and ſimple law of aſſociation being this, that two ſenſations, or ideas, preſent to the mind at the ſame time, will afterwards recal each other; which was well underſtood by Mr. Locke,

Locke, and all who had treated of aſſociation before Mr. Hume. Let us now ſee how eaſily this obſervation will explain Mr. Hume's three caſes.

Things connected in *time* and *place* are generally conſidered together, or ſo near to each other, that the remains of one of the ideas is not gone out of the mind before the other has entered it. This is the reaſon why we ſo readily repeat numbers in their progreſſive order, and are not ſo well able to do it in a retrogade order. We have been moſt accuſtomed to repeat them in that order.

Reſemblance is a *partial ſameneſs*, and when that part of any idea which is the very ſame with part of another is excited, it is evidently in conſequence of a former joint impreſſion that the remainder of the ſame idea is revived alſo.

Mr. Hume ſays, p. 44, that *contrariety* may perhaps be conſidered as a ſpecies of *reſemblance*, for a reaſon for which I muſt refer the reader to the Eſſay itſelf. But things oppoſed to one another are frequently

compared,

compared, and *conſidered together*. It is, therefore, from frequent joint impreſſion that their eaſy aſſociation is moſt naturally to be accounted for.

Things that are *cauſes and effects* to each other are alſo often contemplated together, and by habit we do not conſider our knowledge of any thing to be complete, without knowing the cauſe if it be an effect, or the effects if it be a cauſe. We think the idea to be as incomplete as that of the head of a man without his body, or of his body without his head. We feel them as different parts of the ſame thing.

Little, and imperfect, as what Mr. Hume has advanced on this ſubject manifeſtly is, he ſeems to have imagined that he had done ſomething very great, when he concludes the Eſſay with ſaying, "the full explication of "this principle, and all its conſequences, "would lead us into reaſonings too pro- "found and too copious for theſe Eſſays. "It is ſufficient at preſent to have eſta- "bliſhed this concluſion, that the three "connecting principles of all ideas are the

"relations

"relations of reſemblance, contiguity, and "cauſation."

The fourth Eſſay, entitled *Sceptical Doubts*, relates to our inferring an effect from a cauſe, aſſerting, that it is by a proceſs that is not properly *reaſoning*, becauſe all that we obſerve is the two ſeparate ideas, and we are altogether ignorant of their connexion; and in his fifth Eſſay, entitled, quaintly enough, *the Sceptical Solution of thoſe Doubts*, he ſays, that we make the inference by the principle of *habit*, or cuſtom; which comes to this, that the two ideas have always been aſſociated together, ſo that, as he expreſſes it, the mind is naturally led from one of them to the other, or, as he ſhould have ſaid more properly, one of them will neceſſarily introduce the other.

Leaving the queſtion in this ſtate, he may, with ſuperficial readers, have weakened the foundation of our reaſoning from effects to cauſes, as if it was properly no *reaſoning* at all (which is language that he frequently uſes) but only an arbitrary, and perhaps ill-founded, aſſociation of ideas. Whereas he would

would only have done juſtice to his ſubject, to have added, that, having found, in all ſuch *conſtant* conjunctions of ideas, with reſpect to which we have been able to make any diſcovery at all, that the conjunction was really *neceſſary*, we conclude that the conjunction, if conſtant, is equally neceſſary, even when we are not able diſtinctly to perceive it. We, therefore, *preſume* it, and ſecurely act upon it. Indeed, without having made any diſcovery at all, we could not but be ſenſible, that if two events always follow one another, there muſt be ſome ſufficient reaſon for it.

As almoſt every pretenſion to *diſcovery*, or *novelty*, is contained in this obſervation of Mr. Hume's, I ſhall conſider it a little more ſtrictly. When we ſay that two events, or appearances, are *neceſſarily connected*, all that we can mean is, that ſome more general law of nature muſt be violated before thoſe events can be ſeparated. For example, I find that the ſounding of one muſical ſtring will make another ſtring that is uniſon, &c. with it, to ſound alſo; and finding this

obſervation invariable, I call the ſounding of the firſt ſtring the *cauſe*, and that of the ſecond the *effect*, and have no apprehenſion of being diſappointed in my expectation of the conſequence. But I do not ſee what ſhould make this conjunction neceſſary, till I diſcover that ſound conſiſts of a vibratory motion of the air, and that the air being put into this vibratory motion by the firſt ſtring, communicates the ſame to the ſecond by its pulſes, in the ſame manner as the firſt ſtring itſelf was made to vibrate.

In like manner, it was always known (and mankind have always acted on the perſuaſion) that reſpiration is neceſſary to animal life, and that air frequently breathed, &c. is fatal to it, though it is only of late that we have diſcovered the connexion of thoſe effects with the cauſe. In due time we may diſcover the cauſe of this cauſe, &c.

The idea annexed to the term *cauſe*, or *neceſſary agency*, is not a ſimple idea, or what could originally have been formed in the mind by the perception of any two other ideas,

ideas, as Mr. Hume ſeems to have expected (and which notion alone could ſuggeſt any difficulty in the caſe) but it repreſents the impreſſion left in the mind by obſerving what is common to numberleſs caſes in which there is a conſtant conjunction of appearances or events, in ſome of which we are able to ſee the proximate cauſe of the conjunction, but with reſpect to the reſt we only *preſume* it, from the ſimilarity of the caſes. Notwithſtanding, therefore, a definite idea, correſponding to the words *cauſe* or *power*, does not occur to the mind on the original compariſon of any two particular ideas, the inference from effects to cauſes, whether Mr. Hume will call it *reaſoning* or not, is, in many caſes, as ſafe as any reaſoning whatever, ſo that no ſceptic can derive the leaſt advantage from this conſideration.

The latter part of this Eſſay (which I dare ſay Mr. Hume conſidered as the firſt in importance in the whole work) contains a very imperfect and manifeſtly falſe account of the difference between *belief* and *imagi-*

nation. "Belief," he ſays, p. 82, "is no-"thing but a more vivid, lively, forceable, "firm, ſteady conception of an object, than "what the imagination alone is ever able "to attain." And to account for this *manner* of conception, he ſays, that whenever we are led from one idea to another, by the connexion of *reſemblance*, or *contiguity*, and therefore, probably, by that of *cauſation* too, we at the ſame time get a *ſtronger* conception of it than we ſhould otherwiſe attain. Unable to account for this, he aſcribes the fact to an *inſtinct of nature*. But he might juſt as well have done what Drs. Reid, Beattie, and Oſwald, did afterwards, viz. aſcribe the ſentiment of *belief itſelf*, as well as that which is the *cauſe of belief*, to an arbitrary inſtinct of nature.

In reality, nothing can be more evidently falſe than what he here ſuppoſes. For how often does it happen that we are more affected by a repreſentation of fictitious diſtreſs, in a novel, or on the theatre, than by inſtances of real diſtreſs in common life. It is true that, *ceteris paribus*, *reality* makes a

ſtronger

ſtronger impreſſion than *fiction*; and, therefore, when an impreſſion is, by artificial means, made ſtronger than uſual, it ſometimes impoſes upon us for truth. But the idea annexed to the word *truth* is of a very complex nature, and is the impreſſion that is left in the mind by thouſands of caſes in which *real exiſtence* has been diſcriminated from that which has none.

A child hears a tale of diſtreſs, and having always had the truth told him, he, of courſe, believes it, and according to his previouſly acquired ſenſibility, is affected with it; but he inquires farther, and finds that he has been impoſed upon. Either no ſuch perſon exiſted, or ſuch and ſuch things did not happen to him. He alſo reads tales of diſtreſs, &c. in books, but finds, by comparing them with other books, and other accounts, they had no exiſtence. From much obſervation of this kind, a complex idea, formed by a number of circumſtances, is left in the mind, and to this he gives the name of *truth*, an idea which he learns to reſpect more and more every day, and which

he acquires a habit of affixing, with all its *ſecondary ideas* of reſpect, with juſtneſs and effect, as he advances in life; ſo that, independently of the *ſtrength of our feelings*, or imagination, we act very differently, according as we ſee reaſon to annex this idea of *truth* to a ſtory, or not.

Mr. Hume ſays, p. 90, "When a ſword is "levelled at my breaſt, does not the idea of "wounds and pains ſtrike me more ſtrongly "than when a glaſs of wine is preſented to "me, even though, by accident, this idea "ſhould occur after the appearance of the "latter object." But let an executioner, whom he believes to have a commiſſion to run a ſword through his body, be at the diſtance of a hundred miles from him, and though there be neither a ſword, nor the figure of a ſword near him, he would, I doubt not, by only *thinking* of a ſword, in thoſe circumſtances, feel very differently, and more ſtrongly, than if he ſhould take a real ſword in his own hand, and hold the point of it to his naked breaſt, when he had no apprehenſion of any deſign to hurt

himſelf with it. But how does this tally with Mr. Hume's account of the difference between belief and fiction?

It is evident that Mr. Hume had no idea of the extent of the power of aſſociation in the human mind, by means of which a ſingle idea may conſiſt of thouſands of parts, being a miniature of numberleſs *trains of ideas*, and of whole ſucceſſive *ſtates of mind*, and yet be perfectly diſtinct from other ideas, conſiſting of as many parts, every ſuch complex idea retaining its ſeparate character and powers. The very *names* of perſons famous in hiſtory excite in our minds an epitome of all that we know concerning them, the particulars of which we may have forgotten. How complex alſo are the ideas belonging to words expreſſive of *national cuſtoms*, *ranks*, and *orders of men*, which, however, when pronounced ever ſo ſlightly, excite ideas perfectly diſtinct from each other, as much as thoſe denoting the moſt ſimple ideas.

Now the ideas of *cauſe*, *effect*, *reaſon*, *inſtinct*, *probability*, *contingency*, *truth*, *falſehood*,

hood, &c. &c. &c. are of this nature, requiring definitions of ſome extent; and the ideas they in fact excite are miniatures of much more than enters into the ſhorteſt poſſible deſcription of them; for they were not attained in that manner; and yet all the parts perfectly coaleſce, and form diſtinct and permanent ideas. I have endeavoured to give ſome account of this buſineſs in the third of the *Eſſays prefixed to my edition of Hartley's theory of the mind*.

Mr. Hume, in his ſixth Eſſay, p. 94, ſays that "the ſentiment of belief is begotten "in the mind by an inexplicable contri-"vance of nature. Let any one try," he ſays, p. 97, "to account for this operation "of the mind upon any received ſyſtem of "philoſophy, and he will be ſenſible of the "difficulty." On the ſyſtem of Hartley there is no difficulty in it at all.

In the ſeventh Eſſay, *on Power*, he only more particularly inſiſts upon it, that we know of no connexion between the idea of any cauſe and that of any effect, though we ſuppoſe there *is* ſome connexion. Of this

I have

I have given, I preſume, a ſufficient account already.

In his eighth Eſſay, on *Liberty and Neceſſity*, he very clearly illuſtrates ſome of the arguments in favour of Neceſſity; but not having any comprehenſion of the *great ſyſtem*, of which that doctrine is a part, he, without the leaſt reaſon, and without the leaſt concern, abandons it to the moſt ſhocking immoral conſequences. Whereas, in reality, nothing is more favourable to the moſt ſublime ſentiments of virtue, in all its branches, as I have ſhewn at large in my *Illuſtrations of that doctrine*.

His ninth Eſſay, *on the Reaſon of Animals*, contains very little indeed. He only aſſerts, p. 169, that "it is cuſtom alone that engages animals, from every object that "ſtrikes their ſenſes, to infer its uſual attendant, and carries their imaginations "from the appearance of one to conceive "the other, in that ſtrong and lively manner which we denominate belief." This, unable to give any better account of, he calls

calls *inſtinct*, and ſays, that man avoids fire by inſtinct alſo. Whereas, if by inſtinct be meant any thing different from the aſſociation of ideas (which certainly were not born with us) nothing is more contrary to fact. A child knows nothing of a dread of fire, but acquires it in conſequence of the ſenſation of pain from it. He can even hardly be prevented from putting his finger into the flame of a candle. How Mr. Hume could reconcile this well-known fact with a proper *inſtinctive dread of fire*, is not eaſy to ſay.

The tenth Eſſay, on *Miracles*, is intended to ſupport a principle, according to which the relation of no appearance whatever, not evidently ſimilar to former appearances, can be credible; a principle which we ſee refuted every day in experimental philoſophy, and which nothing could have given the leaſt countenance to, or have intitled to any conſideration, but its affecting the credit of the miracles recorded in the Scriptures. On this account it has been

been refuted by many perſons, and I have conſidered it in my *Inſtitutes of Natural and Revealed Religion.*

The eleventh Eſſay, *on a particular Providence and a future State*, I have examined in my tenth Letter.

In his twelfth Eſſay, Mr. Hume maintains that "becauſe all we know of any object is "the idea of it in our minds, we can never "prove," p. 241, "that thoſe ideas, or per-"ceptions, may not ariſe from the energy of "the mind itſelf, or from the ſuggeſtion of "ſome inviſible or unknown ſpirit, or ſome "other cauſe ſtill more unknown to us," and that the ſuppoſition of a connexion between thoſe perceptions of the mind and external objects is without any foundation in reaſoning; not conſidering that we have juſt the ſame reaſon for believing the exiſtence of external objects, that we have for the truth of the Copernican ſyſtem. They are *the eaſieſt hypotheſes for acknowledged facts*, as I have ſhewn at large in the *Introduction to my Examination of the writings of Drs. Reid, Beattie*, and *Oſwald*.

His

His obſervation, p. 243, that *all ſenſible qualities*, and, therefore, that *extenſion* itſelf, is in the mind, and not without us, is trifling. He might as well have ſaid, that becauſe *ſound* is a thing formed within a muſical inſtrument, and not without it, there is nothing without it that produces the ſound.

To his objection to the infinite diviſibility of matter, p. 246, to ſome angles being infinitely leſs than others, and thoſe again diviſible *ad infinitum*, which he allows to be *demonſtrable*, and yet ſays, is *big with contradiction and abſurdity*, at the ſame time that he acknowledges that "nothing can be more "ſceptical, or more full of doubt and heſita-"tion, than this ſcepticiſm itſelf," I ſurely need ſay nothing. This does not amount to ſo much as a *ſceptical ſolution of a ſceptical doubt*. It may rather be called *the ſceptical propoſal of a ſceptical doubt*.

In the concluſion of this laſt Eſſay, we find the outline of all the ſcepticiſm of his poſthumous work, with the ſame paltry *cover*, viz. that "all reaſoning from the rela-"tion of cauſe and effect is founded on a

"certain inſtinct of our nature, and may be "fallacious and deceitful," p. 251, that "we can never ſatisfy ourſelves concerning "any determination we may form with re-"gard to the origin of worlds, and the ſitua-"tion of nature from and to eternity;" p. 255, that "divinity or theology," p. 209, "as it proves the exiſtence of a deity, &c. "has a foundation in reaſoning, ſo far as it "is ſupported by experience" (which ſupport in a former Eſſay he abſolutely denies it to have) "but that its beſt and moſt "ſolid foundation is *faith* and divine reve-"lation."

In the firſt of theſe Eſſays, Mr. Hume had ſaid, "We have, in theſe Eſſays, attempted "to throw ſome light upon ſubjects, from "which uncertainty has hitherto deterred "the wiſe, and obſcurity the ignorant." How very ſmall is the light that he has thrown, and mixed with how much darkneſs, I need not repeat. "Happy," ſays he, p. 18, "if we can unite the different ſpecies of "philoſophy, by reconciling profound in-"quiry with clearneſs, and truth with no-"velty;

" velty; and ſtill more happy, if reaſoning
" in this eaſy manner, we can undermine
" the foundation of an abſtruſe philoſophy,
" which ſeems to have ſerved hitherto only
" as a ſhelter to ſuperſtition, and a cover to
" abſurdity and error."

Now I neither ſee the *profundity*, nor the *clearneſs* of his reaſoning, except in things with reſpect to which he is far from being *original*, notwithſtanding his advantage of a command of language, and a great power of perſpicuity, where his argument would admit of it. As to the *abſtruſe philoſophy* which he meant to undermine, it could be nothing but the doctrine of *certainty*, and a ſteady perſuaſion concerning *truth*, and eſpecially the truths of natural and revealed religion; and what kind of a mind muſt that man have had, to whom *this* could give any ſatisfaction!

All men by no means judge of the value of publications by the ſame rules with Mr. Hume, or perhaps his own Eſſays would be in more danger than he himſelf imagined. " When we run over libraries, perſuaded of

" thoſe

"thoſe principles," ſays he, p. 259, "what "havock muſt we make? If we take in "hand any volume of Divinity, or School "Metaphyſics, for inſtance, let us aſk, Does "it contain any abſtract reaſonings concern-"ing quantity or number? No. Does it "contain any experimental reaſonings con-"cerning matter of fact, or exiſtence? No. "Commit it then to the flames. For it can "contain nothing then but ſophiſtry and il-"luſion." It is happy for us all, that we are not judges for one another in theſe caſes, but that a wiſe providence over-rules all things. The *ſcriptures* were certainly not meant to come under either of Mr. Hume's characters of *books to be ſaved from the flames.*

In the preceding obſervations, I think I have deſcanted upon every thing of Mr. Hume's, in which it can be pretended, or in which he himſelf would have pretended, that he had made any advances in the knowledge of the human mind. I need not now ſay how inconſiderable thoſe advances were. All that he has obſerved relates to the power of aſſociation, and his ideas on that ſubject were

were much confined, going very little, if indeed, on the whole, any thing at all, beyond thoſe of Mr. Locke, and others who had preceded him.

Mr. Hume had not even a glimpſe of what was at the ſame time executing by Dr. Hartley, who, in an immenſe work, of wonderful comprehenſion and accuracy, has demonſtrated, that this ſingle principle of *aſſociation* is the great law of the human mind, and that all thoſe which Mr Hume, as well as others, had conſidered as *independent faculties*, are merely different *caſes*, or *modifications* of it; that *memory*, *imagination*, *judgment*, the *will*, and the *paſſions*, have the ſame, and no other origin; ſo that by means of this one property, and the circumſtances in which we are placed, we all of us come to be every thing that we are.

In his *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, Mr. Hume very well illuſtrates what I fancy he himſelf would not pretend to be *new*, though, I believe, it had not been ſufficiently attended to by Metaphyſicians, viz. that "utility is the foundation of virtue;"

and

and this being the moſt conſiderable and the moſt elaborate work of Mr. Hume's, I have referred to it as a ſpecimen of analytical reaſoning, in my *Lectures on Criticiſm*. But in this work Mr. Hume refers the pleaſing *feelings*, annexed to the perception of virtue, to *an inſtinct of nature*, confeſſedly unable to trace them any farther. "It is "needleſs," he ſays, p. 85, "to puſh our "reſearches ſo far as to aſk why we have "humanity, or a fellow-feeling with others. "It is ſufficient that this is experienced to "be a principle in human nature. We muſt "ſtop ſomewhere in our examination of "cauſes, and there are in every ſcience ſome "general principles beyond which we can-"not hope to find any principle more gene-"ral." Dr. Hartley, however, not reſting where Mr. Hume did, has, with wonderful ſagacity, diſcovered the origin of benevolence, of the moral ſenſe, and of every other principle before thought to be *inſtinctive*, ſhewing how they are derived from aſſociation, affecting us in our infant ſtate, and as

we advance in life; and he has ſhewn the diverſity that we find in human affections to ariſe from a diverſity of influences, operating on us in the ſame general manner.

In this work, Mr. Hume claſſes *humility* among the *vices*, with no other view, that I can perceive, but to ſhew his contempt for the chriſtian ſyſtem, in which it makes a principal figure, as a virtue. And he has wholly overlooked all the virtues of the *devotional kind*, when, in fact, they may be ſhewn, by arguments independent of the peculiar doctrines of revelation, to be, in their own nature, the moſt truly *valuable*, as well as the moſt *ſublime* of all others, and to form what may be called the *key-ſtone* of every truly great and heroic character. Without the virtues of this claſs (though Dr. Smith conſiders Mr. Hume as "approaching as "nearly to the idea of a perfectly wiſe and "virtuous man as perhaps the nature of "human frailty will permit") his character muſt have been as imperfect as his views (looking

(looking to nothing beyond the grave) were narrow.

I have thus given you my reaſons, as briefly as I well could, for placing Mr. Hume ſo low as I do in the claſs of *metaphyſical writers*, or *moral philoſophers*. As to *Natural Philoſophy*, or *Mathematics*, I never heard that he had any pretenſions to merit; and of that which conſtitutes an *hiſtorian*, you will not, I imagine, think that much remains to him, beſides that of a *pleaſing compiler*, after reading Dr. Towers's judicious Remarks on his *Hiſtory of England*. His *Miſcellaneous* and *Political* Eſſays always pleaſed me, but they by no means entitle him to the *firſt rank* among writers of either claſs. As to his *ſtyle*, notwithſtanding its excellence in ſome reſpects, I have ſhewn in my *Engliſh Grammar* (and, as I have been informed, to Mr. Hume's own ſatisfaction) that he has departed farther from the true idiom of the Engliſh language, than perhaps any other writer of note in the preſent age.

Submitting all my obſervations to your own judgment, and ſincerely wiſhing the

happieſt iſſue to your laudable purſuit of truth, I remain,

Dear Sir,

Your very humble Servant,

J. PRIESTLEY.

CALNE, *March*, 1780.

ADDITIONAL LETTERS TO A PHILOSOPHICAL UNBELIEVER.

IN ANSWER TO

Mr. WILLIAM HAMMON.

PREFACE.

IT is certainly to be wiſhed that every man was at full liberty, not only to publiſh his real opinions on any ſubject whatever, but alſo to urge them with the greateſt force, and to recommend them by the ſtrongeſt arguments that he can produce in ſupport of them. No *lover of truth* will wiſh to ſtand on any other ground. For my own part, I rejoice that a *profeſſed*

atheiſt has thought proper to ſtand forth in defence of his principles, though it is not with all the conſiſtent boldneſs that may be expected from one who believes in a God, a providence, and a future ſtate. I myſelf have no opinions that I wiſh to ſhelter behind any *authority* whatever; and ſhould rejoice to ſee the time (and that time, I doubt not, as the world improves in wiſdom, will come) when the civil powers will relieve themſelves from the attention they have hitherto given to all matters of ſpeculation, and religion amongſt the reſt; an attention which has proved ſo embarraſſing to the governors, and ſo diſtreſſing to the governed; and when no more countenance will be given to any particular mode of *religion*, than is given to particular modes of *medicine*, or of *philoſophy*.

Individuals are much better ſituated for providing for themſelves, in this reſpect, than any *repreſentatives* can do for them; and the religion that men would voluntarily adopt for themſelves would make them the beſt

beſt ſubjects to any government, and eſpecially to one that ſhould allow them all, without diſtinction, this perfect and equal liberty. This would be an attachment much ſtronger, and more valuable, than any that can be ſecured by *hire*, as is that of the members of an eſtabliſhed church. However, till *nations* get wiſdom, *individuals* muſt bear with their folly, and endeavour to inſtruct them; and this is moſt effectually done, by the explicit avowal, and the fearleſs defence, of whatever we apprehend to be true, and to be conducive to the good of ſociety and of mankind.

That our readers may form a juſt idea of the ſubject of the preſent controverſy, it may be proper to inform them, that Mr. Hammon, though a declared atheiſt, is far from aſſerting, with the Epicureans of old, and the generality of atheiſts before him, that there are no marks of *deſign* in the viſible univerſe. Beſides what I have quoted from him in the courſe of theſe Letters, he conſiders it as undeniably true (p. 4.) that "atoms cannot be arranged in

" a manner expreſſive of the moſt exquiſite " deſign, without competent intelligence " having exiſted ſomewhere."

He ſays farther (*Prefatory Addreſs*, p. 28) The "*vis naturæ*, the perpetual induſtry, " intelligence, and proviſion of nature, muſt " be apparent to all who ſee, feel, or think. " I mean to diſtinguiſh this active, intelli- " gent, and deſigning principle, inherent " as much in matter, as the properties of " gravity, or any elaſtic, attractive, or re- " pulſive power, from any extraneous fo- " reign force and deſign, in an inviſible " agent, ſupreme, though hidden lord, and " maſter over all effects and appearances " that preſent themſelves to us in the courſe " of nature. The laſt ſuppoſition makes " the univerſe, and all other organized " matter, a machine, made or contrived by " the arbitrary will of another being, which " other being is called *God*; and my theory " makes a God of this univerſe, or admits " no other God, or deſigning principle, " than matter itſelf, and its various orga- " nizations."

Such

Such is the fair ſtate of this controverſy. It is my buſineſs, therefore, to ſhew, in the firſt place, that the viſible univerſe is not, and cannot be, that *uncauſed being*, which Mr. Hammon ſuppoſes; and ſecondly, that the ſeat of that intelligence, which is acknowledged to be in the univerſe, cannot be in the viſible univerſe itſelf, but muſt reſide in, and belong to, ſome being diſtinct from it. One of theſe hypotheſes muſt be true; for a third cannot be imagined.

Theſe, then, are the principal ſubjects of the following Letters. But I have alſo taken ſome notice of what Mr. Hammon has obſerved with reſpect to the moral attributes of the deity, the moral influence of religion, and other ſubjects of a miſcellaneous nature.

Mr. Hammon is alſo ſo far from reprobating, as other atheiſts have done, the idea of a *future life*, that he not only conſiders it as deſirable, but even as not impoſſible, or incredible. For he places it among the things *inadmiſſible* and *inconcluſive* (p. 10) that

that "an atheiſt believes himſelf to be at "his death for ever excluded from return-"ing life."

Atheiſm, ſo qualified, certainly loſes much of the horror with which it has hitherto been regarded, and affords room to hope that it will ſoon give place to the ſyſtem which gives us the fulleſt and moſt ſatisfactory aſſurance of that *future life*, to which Mr. Hammon looks with *deſire*, and, ſeemingly, not without ſome degree of *hope*. This certainly ought to be a motive with the world to give him a patient hearing; they have ſo much reaſon to expect a favourable iſſue to the debate. What occaſion can there be for *terror*, or *violence* of any kind, when there is ſo little reaſon to diſtruſt the natural power of *truth*. If I fail, let abler champions be called in; but let atheiſm triumph rather than religion, by the help of force.

To conclude this preface with enforcing the ſentiments with which it began: let thoſe weak chriſtians, who are for calling in the aid of the magiſtrate to ſuppreſs

hereſy, learn to reſpect their religion more, and not act the part of the *moles* (in the excellent compariſon made uſe of by a worthy baronet, in the late debate on the Diſſenters bill) who thought that the mountain, at the foot of which they were at work, was in danger of falling, and conſulted how to provide ſome better foundation for it. Let them be aſſured, that its own natural baſis, is abundantly ſufficient for its ſupport.

If this compariſon does not ſtrike them, let them conſider the inſtructive fable of *the horſe and the ſtag*. What the horſe loſt by calling in the aid of the man, is but a faint emblem of what chriſtianity has loſt, by calling in the aid of the magiſtrate.—They have both of them, by this means, got *maſters*, who, on all occaſions, make uſe of them for their own purpoſes, without any regard to them.

This I now urge in favour of my adverſary; but it is language that I may have learned from ſtanding in the ſame predicament myſelf. For, as I have obſerved in the courſe of theſe Letters, if the laws of this

this country were ſtrictly executed, we ſhould both be involved in the ſame fate. And, perhaps, while my antagoniſt and myſelf, like *the mouſe and the frog*, are aſſaulting each other with our weapons of pointed ſtraw, the great *eagle* of *civil power* may ſeize upon us both, and cruſh us, without diſtinction, and without mercy.

I make no apology for making no difference between the author of the *Prefatory Addreſs*, and the body of the work to which I am replying, as Mr. Hammon, the writer of the former, approves of, and adopts the latter; and to have diſtinguiſhed them from one another would have been rather embarraſſing. All the Letters are addreſſed to Mr. Hammon.

ADDITIONAL

ADDITIONAL LETTERS

TO A

PHILOSOPHICAL UNBELIEVER.

LETTER I.

Of Mr. HAMMON's *Profeſſions and Conduct, &c.*

SIR,

WHEN I wrote my *Letters to a philoſophical Unbeliever*, I certainly wiſhed that ſome perſon of that character would calmly and ſeriouſly diſcuſs the arguments which I there advanced, for the belief of a God and a benevolent providence, and give me an opportunity of perceiving what it was that really determined his mind to a concluſion ſo different from my own; though I did not, as you ſeem to have imagined,

imagined, undertake to anſwer all the objections that might be made to what I had advanced on the ſubject. There is, however, ſomething ſo peculiar in your Anſwer, that I have thought proper to take notice of it, and on that account to add a few more *Letters* to thoſe that I publiſhed before.

There is a great appearance of *ingenuouſneſs*, and alſo of *courage*, in your conduct, which does you honour; and in this country, and in theſe times, I am confident it will not bring you into any inconvenience. You ſay (*Advertiſement*, p. 8) that you will be looked on as "a miracle of hardineſs, "for daring to put your name to what you "have publiſhed." And whereas, ſome have doubted, whether there ever was ſuch a perſon as a proper atheiſt, you ſay (*Prefatory Addreſs*, p. 17.) "To put that out "of all manner of doubt, I do declare "that, upon my honour, I am one. Be it, "therefore, for the future remembered, "that in London, in the kingdom of Eng"land, in the year of our Lord one thou-

"ſand ſeven hundred and eighty-one, a "man hath publicly declared himſelf an "Atheiſt." You even profeſs your readineſs (ib. p. 21.) to ſuffer martyrdom in this cauſe, and to glory in it.

You muſt allow me, however, to obſerve, that I have not found in your conduct that perfect ingenuouſneſs and courage to which you pretend. You charge me with ſending no anſwer to the *Letter* which you have publiſhed in your *poſtſcript*, or "none that "ever came to your hand." But whether this was *my* fault or *yours*, let our readers judge from the following facts. That letter I received (only dated September 23d, and not October the 23d, 1781) on the 25th of September; and on the 27th of the ſame month, I ſent the following anſwer; addreſſed, according to your own ſubſcription, to Mr. *William Hammon, jun. Liverpool.* The poſt-mark alſo of your letter, was LIVERPOOL.

SIR,

SIR,

I SHALL be very happy to do every thing in my power to make you perfectly eaſy, with reſpect to the part you wiſh to take. But this can only be by giving you my real opinion, that you have nothing at all to fear, eſpecially if you write with decency, as a ſerious enquirer after truth. I am myſelf as obnoxious to the laws of this country as you can be; and at this day a *heretic* is, I ſhould think, in more danger than an *unbeliever*.

If, contrary to my expectations, any proſecution ſhould be undertaken againſt you, I can promiſe the moſt earneſt interpoſition of myſelf and my friends in your favour; but farther than this, I do not think it right to engage myſelf.

I do not recollect that I have any where undertaken to anſwer all my opponents: but this is of no conſequence. If what you write be deemed worthy of an anſwer, you need

need not fear having one, and from an abler hand than mine.

Sincerely wiſhing you may proceed in your purpoſe, and meet with no obſtruction in it, I am, SIR,

Your very humble ſervant,

BIRMINGHAM, 27th September, 1781. J. PRIESTLEY.

Four days after this I received the following.

REV. SIR,

I WROTE you a letter on a philoſophical ſubject this day ſe'nnight, ſince which I have had no anſwer. I only want now to know whether that letter reached you, and whether you intend to ſend me any anſwer, or not. I am, REV. SIR,

Your moſt obedient and humble ſervant,

WILLIAM HAMMON, JUN.

LIVERPOOL, September 30, 1781.

The poſt-mark of this letter was alſo LIVERPOOL.

I cannot ſay that the *tone* of this letter was pleaſing to me; nor indeed is it of a piece with the *civility* of the former letter; beſides that, the complaint contained in it muſt, upon the ſlighteſt reflection, have appeared unreaſonable. For I received your letter on the 25th, and omitting only one ſingle day, anſwered it on the 27th; and though it was poſſible that you might have received an anſwer before the 30th, it was barely ſo; and allowing for common accidents, ſuch as my being out of the way, or very particularly engaged at the time of its arrival at my houſe (which is not in Birmingham, but only near it) it was not to be expected.

No perſon, however, of your name could be found in Liverpool, though ſeveral perſons, ſome of them my particular friends, and at my requeſt, made diligent enquiry concerning you. My own letter was returned to me, and it is now at your ſervice, with the proper poſt-marks upon it,

and ſhall be ſent to you without delay, if you will inform me where it will really find you.

Your *Prefatory Addreſs* is dated Oxford-ſtreet, N° 418; but at that place no ſuch perſon could be heard of. There is alſo no name of a *publiſher* annexed to your work. How then can you ſay, as you do (ib. p. 21) that you have "ventured to ſubſcribe your "publication with your name, as well as I "do my *Letters*, to which your publica-"tion is an anſwer." If you enquire for me at Birmingham, as I did for you at Liverpool, I have no doubt but you will readily find me, and I aſſure you I ſhall be very glad to ſee you there.

As to your readineſs to ſuffer *martyrdom* in the cauſe of atheiſm, I hope you will never be put to the trial. But you muſt allow me to obſerve, that this oſtentatious profeſſion of your courage before hand, together with your deficiency in point of *ingenuouſneſs of mind*, in the inſtance abovementioned, gives me no expectation that you would really ſtand it.

You ſeem to be apprehenſive of the *laws of this country*; but I know of no law that can affect you, except *one*, which equally affects myſelf. I mean the act of king William, which makes it *blaſphemy*, puniſhable by confiſcation of goods, and, if perſiſted in, impriſonment for life, either to deny that "any of the Three Perſons, the "Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, is God; or "to maintain that there are more Gods "than one." Of theſe three, I have not ſcrupled, on many occaſions, to deny the divinity of one, and the ſeparate exiſtence of another; ſo that if the law were executed, I ſhould ſuffer juſt the ſame as you, who deny the divinity of one of them, and the exiſtence of the other two.

I would not be underſtood to boaſt of my courage, though I have lived in the open violation of this law, even citing it, and cenſuring it about twenty years; becauſe I ſhould not have ventured to walk at large, as I have done, and now do, by the mere connivance of my countrymen, unprotected by any law, if I had not thought that I had

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ſufficient reaſons to confide in their good-will, and to preſume on the improving *ſpirit of the times*. Without this ſecret perſuaſion, if I had publiſhed at all (in oppoſition to an article of faith, ſo guarded by laws and penalties) it would probably have been without my name; but I think I ſhould not have uſed any *falſe pretences*, or have made a parade of courage, which I really had not. I hope you will find that the people of this country, at leaſt, have made ſo much progreſs in that *melioration* of which you profeſs yourſelf to be a believer, as that an avowed *Atheiſt* has nothing more to fear than an avowed *Socinian*.

The religion that I profeſs hath never been more than barely *tolerated* by the civil power of any country, and very ſeldom ſo much as that. But in this circumſtance it more reſembles the kingdom of my maſter, which he declared to be *not of this world*.

I own I am ſo much impreſſed by this conſideration, that I do not wiſh that my religion may ever be in any other circumſtances, ſo as to receive any thing that can

be called *aid* or *countenance*, from worldly power. We have ſeen enough of a pretended *alliance between Church and State*. It has only contributed to debaſe the one, and enſlave the other.

It is alſo not perfectly of a piece with the *courage* to which you pretend, to endeavour to divert the reſentment of *Chriſtians*, by intimating, that *they* are not concerned in the queſtion. You ſay (*Advertiſement*, p. 5) "Revealed knowledge is not deſcanted upon, and therefore Chriſtians need take no "offence. Doubts upon natural religion "have not hitherto been looked upon as "attacks upon revelation, but rather as corroborations of it." And again (p. 7) "The religion eſtabliſhed in this country is "not the religion of nature, but the religion of Moſes and of Jeſus, with whom "the writer has nothing to do. He truſts, "therefore, he ſhall not be received as a "malevolent diſturber of ſuch common "opinions as are eſteemed to keep in order "a ſet of low wretches, ſo inclinable to be "lawleſs."

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All this is manifeſtly diſingenuous. Do you really believe that chriſtianity is not affected by the belief or diſbelief of a God? What becomes of the divine miſſion of Moſes, or of Chriſt, if there be no ſuch being as that *God*, from whom they pretended to be ſent. You muſt know very well, that they are not ſuch doubts as theſe, that were ever thought to be any corroboration of revealed religion.

What could it be but *timidity*, and to avoid giving umbrage to the ruling powers, that led you to declare (ibid. p. 6) that you have no deſire to make converts, and to ſay (*Prefatory Addreſs*, p. 15) "I declare I am "rather pleaſed there are ſo few Atheiſts, "than at all anxious to make more. I "triumph in my ſuperior light. I and my "friend are ſo proud, in our ſingularity of "being atheiſts, that we will hardly open "our lips in company, when the queſtion "is ſtarted, for fear of making converts, "and ſo leſſening our own enjoyments, by a "numerous diviſion of our privilege with "others!"

Now I am at a loſs how to reconcile this either with your publiſhing any thing on the ſubject, or with the *benevolence* to which you likewiſe pretend in this publication, as "an attempt (*Advertiſement*, p. 7) to ſub-"ſtitute better foundations for morality," and with the idea of that *debaſement of mind*, which you frequently aſcribe to the belief of religion. If atheiſm be a good thing, with reſpect to yourſelf and your friends, why ſhould it not be equally good with reſpect to others, and from what good principle can you wiſh to confine the benefit to yourſelves only; and why ſhould you not both *ſpeak*, as well as *write*, and *ſuffer martyrdom* in the cauſe. If, on the other hand, religion be a thing valuable to ſociety at large, though it ſhould happen not to be ſo with reſpect to yourſelf, why do you not forbear to write, as well as to ſpeak againſt it. You ſay (*Prefatory Addreſs*, p. 15) that you are reſolved to make no reply to any anſwer I ſhall make to you; and that if I ſhould have the advantage in the argument, you will "bear my triumph without repining!" Yet

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in the ſame page, you promiſe an anſwer to my intended letters in behalf of *revelation*. I really ſee no ſort of conſiſtency either with reſpect to *ſenſe*, or to *courage*, in this conduct of yours.

In general, I have no reaſon to complain of uncivil treatment from you; but it is not very handſome in you to put the interpretation that you do upon my ſaying, that I ſhall proceed with my *Letters to a philoſophical Unbeliever*, provided that thoſe which I have publiſhed be *well received*, when you ſay (*Prefatory Addreſs*, p. 14) "It is, in the "ſum total, juſt as much as if you had ſaid, "*provided this book ſells well, I will write* "*another*."

It is true, as you ſay, that I have written many books, and if life and health be continued to me, I ſhall probably write more; but I can truly ſay (and the nature and complexion of my publications will not contradict it) that I have never yet written any thing ſolely, or principally, with a view to any advantage that might accrue from it; and ſeveral things, with a certainty of being a loſer

a loſer. Not one of them was written to pleaſe a patron, to court the populace, or to recommend myſelf to any ſect of chriſtians. Certainly not thoſe of the eſtabliſhed church, and if poſſible, ſtill leſs thoſe of the ſame denomination with myſelf. It was even contrary to my own expectation, that, after ſome of my publications, I ſhould have met with any countenance from them. But they have had much more liberality, than I had preſumed upon. And my theological writings are certainly ill calculated to gain the applauſe of thoſe who are uſually ſtiled philoſophers. My object, I truſt, is the ſimple purſuit of truth, from the full perſuaſion, that the conſequence of this will be ultimately friendly to ſociety.

The ſale of a book is certainly one means of judging of its ſucceſs; but of this I can aſſure you, Sir, I have no reaſon to boaſt; for, inſtead of the *number of editions* you ſpeak of, not one, and that a very moderate one, hath yet been ſold. In other reſpects alſo, the event has been as little flattering. I do not know that my book has

has converted a ſingle unbeliever; and if, as I hope, it has confirmed the faith of ſome, you ſay it hath contributed to the unhinging and overturning of yours. On no account, therefore, have I, as yet, any encouragement to proceed with this work, as I once intended. You have, however, no need to wait for the *continuation* of thoſe *Letters*, to which you promiſe an anſwer. I have really nothing material to add to what I have already advanced on the ſubject, in my *Inſtitutes of natural and revealed religion*. I could only expect to ſtate ſome parts of the evidences of revelation in a clearer and more unexceptionable light, and to reply with advantage to ſome particular objections. I beg, therefore, that you would reply to that work in the firſt place; and if you advance any thing that I ſhall think to be material, whether I write with more or leſs difficulty, you may depend upon an anſwer from me. I ſhall be happy to contribute any thing in my power to excite a more general attention to a ſubject of

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ſo much importance; being perfectly ſatiſfied, that *truth*, which is all my object, will be a gainer by the diſcuſſion.

I am, Sir,

Your's, &c.

J. PRIESTLEY.

LETTER II.

Of the proper Proof of the Exiſtence of a God, *as an uncauſed Being.*

SIR,

AS you do not diſcuſs any of my arguments at large, but only deliver your own opinion, in a deſultory, but ſtriking manner, I do not know that I can reply to you in any better way, than by firſt bringing into a ſhort compaſs, and exhibiting in one connected view, the principal ſteps in my former arguments, to which you do not appear

appear to me to have given ſufficient attention, notwithſtanding I am ſatisfied, from your quotations, that you have read my book. The *principles and modes of argumentation* are equally known to us both. I have endeavoured to explain them in my former *Letters*, and our *data* are contained in the ſame *face of nature*, which is equally open to our inſpection. Let us then conſider the different concluſions that we draw from the ſame premiſes.

To inſtance in ſome one part of the ſyſtem of nature, as a ſpecimen of the whole, I have obſerved, that from whatever reaſon we are led to conclude that a *teleſcope* required a maker, an *eye* muſt have required a maker alſo; ſince they are both of them equally mere *inſtruments*, adapted to anſwer a particular purpoſe. They, therefore, prove the exiſtence of what we call a *mind*, capable of perceiving that end or purpoſe, with a power of providing that means, and of adapting it to its end.

This mind muſt be a thing entirely foreign to the teleſcope, and conſequently

to

to the eye; it being as contrary to appearances that the eye ſhould make any part of this mind, as that the teleſcope ſhould.

In the ſame manner we are neceſſarily led to conclude, that the *animal* whoſe eye it is, is the production of ſome mind, or intelligent being (for every *power* is referred to ſome *ſubſtance*) foreign to itſelf, and alſo the *ſyſtem* of which that animal is a part, comprehending the whole *viſible univerſe*; each part of which bears a relation to the reſt, and therefore muſt derive its origin from a Being whoſe intelligence is capable of comprehending the whole.

The ſuppoſed *eternal generation* of one plant, or one animal from another, does not in the leaſt remove the difficulty of conceiving how any plant, or animal, ſhould have no foreign cauſe; becauſe there is nothing in any plant or animal, that is even capable of comprehending its own ſtructure; and much leſs have they the additional power of properly *producing* any thing like themſelves, and of enabling one of the

ſpecies

ſpecies to produce another. This has been the effect of an intelligence much ſuperior to theirs. How any thing that they do contributes to this end, is altogether unknown to them.

We are, therefore, in this train of ſpeculation, neceſſarily led to *one great intelligent Being*, capable both of *comprehending*, and of *producing* all the viſible univerſe. This Being muſt have exiſted from all eternity, without any foreign cauſe; for if it had had a beginning, it muſt have had a prior cauſe. We cannot, indeed, conceive *in what manner*, or *on what principles*, as we may ſay, ſuch a Being exiſts, or why it might not be, that he ſhould not have exiſted. But this does not affect the certainty, that ſuch a Being *does* exiſt, drawn from the certain exiſtence of what neceſſarily requires and proves it.

Nor is there any thing peculiar in this particular argument. In many other caſes we admit general *facts*, without pretending to have any idea of the *mode* or *manner* of their exiſtence. We have no idea at all how

how the principles of ſenſation and thought ſhould depend upon, or reſult from, the contexture of the brain; but as we know, from undeniable facts, that theſe properties, or powers, do reſult from that organization, we neceſſarily believe it, without having any farther diſtinct idea on the ſubject. In like manner we firmly believe, that there muſt have been an eternally exiſtent and intelligent Being, capable of producing the viſible univerſe, without having any farther idea how this ſhould be. This is not, ſtrictly ſpeaking, believing what is *incomprehenſible*, but what we *do* perfectly comprehend, though we perceive it is connected with ſomething that we are not able to comprehend. But as you lay particular ſtreſs on this ſubject, I ſhall enter a little farther into the diſcuſſion of it.

You ſay (*Prefatory Addreſs*, p. 32) "It "is impoſſible for an intellectual Being to "believe firmly in that of which he can "form no conception. I hold the deity, "the fancied deity, at leaſt, of whom, "with all his attributes, ſuch pompous "deſcriptions

"descriptions are set forth, to the great "terror of old women, and amusement of "young children, to be an object of which "we form (as appears when we scrutinize "into our ideas) no conception, and there-"fore can give no account." You also say, (p. 48) "All that Epicurus and Lucretius "have so greatly and convincingly said, is "swept away in a moment by these better "reasoners, who yet scruple not to declare, "with Dr. Priestley, that what they reason "about, is not the subject of human un-"derstanding. But let it be asked, is it "not absurd to reason with a man about "that, of which that same man asserts we "have no idea at all? Yet, will Dr. "Priestley argue, and say, it is of no im-"portance whether the person with whom "he argues, has a conception or not of the "subject. *Having no ideas includes no im-"possibility*; therefore, he goes on with his "career of words to argue about an unseen "Being, with another whom he will allow "to have no idea of the subject; and yet it "shall be of no avail in the dispute, whe-

" ther he has or no, or whether he is cap-
" able or incapable of having any. Rea-
" ſon failing, the paſſions are called upon,"
&c.

Let us now ſee whether the *career of words, without ideas*, be more juſtly laid to my charge or yours. In order to this, I wiſh, Sir, you would conſider what conception you have, or what account you can give of an uncauſed and eternally exiſtent univerſe, every ſeparate part of which bears undeniable marks of a deſign and intelligence, of which itſelf is not capable. If you only attend to the caſe, I think you will ſoon find that your ideas are far from being clear or ſatisfactory; notwithſtanding you ſay (p. 37) in general, that to ſuppoſe an " infinite ſucceſſion of finite cauſes, " is ſo far from being difficult, that a mind " not afraid to think, will find it the " moſt eaſy contemplation in the world to " dwell upon. It is probable," you ſay (p. 38) " that if one horſe had a cauſe, all " horſes had. But will not the argument " be more conſonant to itſelf, in ſuppoſing

" all

"all horſes had the ſame cauſe; and as one "is ſeen to be generated from a horſe and a "mare, ſo all were, from all eternity."

How this concluſion can appear *clear* and *ſatisfactory* to your mind, is to me not a little extraordinary, as it gives me no ſatisfaction at all. To me it is the very ſame thing as if, knowing nothing hiſtorically about the matter, a man ſhould find ſuch a city as *London*, and conclude that it had exiſted from eternity, juſt as it is, and had no foreign cauſe; or as if, without knowing any thing concerning the production of *horſes*, or of *men*, he ſhould conclude, that any *particular horſe*, or *man*, had exiſted from eternity, without any foreign cauſe. I do not ſee how theſe caſes differ; becauſe the whole *race of animals* ſhews the ſame marks of deſign, in the relation they bear to other parts of the ſyſtem, that the ſeveral parts of any individual Being bear to the reſt of its particular ſyſtem; and of a deſign of which they are themſelves incapable. Yet, ſhould any perſon affirm, concerning London, or concerning any par-

ticular horſe, or man, what you do not heſitate to affirm concerning the *whole ſpecies*, and concerning the *univerſe*, you would not ſcruple to ſay, that he talked without having any diſtinct conception or ideas, or without reaſoning conſequentially from them. For there is no objection againſt the independent exiſtence of the *individuals*, that does not equally lie againſt that of the *whole ſpecies*.

I am ready enough to acknowledge, that there is ſomething relating to an *independent firſt cauſe*, of which I can form no proper idea, that is, of which I have no knowledge. But this certainly implies no *contradiction*, any more than my ignorance concerning many other things, of the *exiſtence* of which I have no doubt. Every thing that I ſee, I ſuppoſe to have a cauſe foreign to itſelf, becauſe it is not capable of comprehending itſelf; and the whole *viſible univerſe*, in this reſpect, comes under the ſame deſcription with any plant or animal that is a part of it. But there is not this objection againſt the ſuppoſition of a

Being

Being that is capable of comprehending itſelf, and all things elſe, having exiſted without cauſe from all eternity, whatever other difficulties may attend the ſpeculation. If, than, you adopt that opinion which is preſſed with the leaſt difficulty, and is fartheſt removed from a manifeſt abſurdity, you muſt abandon that of the independent exiſtence of the *viſible univerſe*, and have recourſe to an *inviſible firſt cauſe*; which is the only alternative left you, in order to avoid the moſt palpable abſurdity.

As you may, perhaps, ſtill object (though you do not urge it very particularly) that the viſible univerſe itſelf, though bearing marks of deſign, may as well be conceived to have had no foreign cauſe, as that the cauſe of the univerſe ſhould have had none; I ſhall endeavour to ſtate more diſtinctly why I conceive that there is a very great difference in the two caſes.

The obvious reaſon why an *eye*, which is properly an inſtrument, or a means to gain a particular end, and alſo why the *animal* that is poſſeſſed of it, which is a *ſyſtem of*

means adapted to various ends, cannot have been uncauſed, is that they are not capable of comprehending themſelves. They are properly *contrivances*, and therefore, neceſſarily ſuppoſe a *contriver*, juſt as much as a *teleſcope* does, which comes under the ſame deſcription with the *eye*; being an inſtrument adapted to anſwer a particular purpoſe.

Conſequently, the mind can never reſt till it comes to a being poſſeſſed of that wonderful property, but of which we can have no diſtinct ideas, becauſe we are not poſſeſſed of it ourſelves, viz. *ſelf-comprehenſion*. And this Being muſt be ſo eſſentially different from all others, that, whereas they *muſt* be derived, this *may* be underived; and if it *may*, it will follow from other conſiderations, it abſolutely *muſt*. For the mind will always revolt at the idea of going back *ad infinitum*, through an infinite ſucceſſion of mere fine cauſes, whatever you may pretend to the contrary.

It is not pretended, as I have ſaid, that we can conceive, *a priori*, that a Being poſ-

ſeſſed

ſeſſed of ſelf-comprehenſion, muſt have been uncauſed: but as the mind cannot reſt till it arrives at ſuch a Being, and this is a circumſtance eſſentially different from that in which we find every other intelligent Being, it *may* be capable of ſelf-exiſtence, of which the others are not. Any real difference in the condition of theſe beings may be ſufficient to interrupt the analogy between them, ſo that we cannot be authoriſed to conclude concerning the one, what we do concerning the other. But theſe Beings differ in that very circumſtance on which the inference, that a *ſuperior cauſe is wanting*, depends. There muſt be ſome external cauſe of whatever is *limited*, or *finite*. We cannot conceive the poſſibility of its independent exiſtence. But whatever other difficulty attends the ſpeculation, we cannot ſay the ſame concerning a Being *unlimited* and *infinite*.

If any Being whatever bear marks of *deſign*, there muſt exiſt ſomewhere a *mind* capable of that deſign; and if it be not

capable of it itſelf, we muſt look for it in ſome other Being. But if that Being has within itſelf that perfect comprehenſion of itſelf, as well as of all things elſe that depend upon it, we have no longer the ſame motive to make any farther inquiries.—Such a Being as this may, for any thing we can prove to the contrary, have exiſted without cauſe, and from eternity. At the ſame time it muſt be acknowledged, as before, that, ſuppoſing no viſible univerſe to have exiſted, it is abſolutely inconceivable by us, on what principles, as we may ſay, ſuch a Being as the author of this viſible univerſe ſhould exiſt. But being ſenſible of the one, we are neceſſarily led to infer the other.

I am, &c.

LETTER

LETTER III.

Concerning the Seat of that Intelligence, which is conſpicuous in the viſible Univerſe.

SIR,

IN former times, thoſe who denied the being of a God, denied alſo that there was any proof of *intelligence*, or *deſign*, in the viſible univerſe. This, however, you readily admit; but you inſiſt upon it, that the *ſeat* of this intelligence and deſign, is in the viſible univerſe itſelf, and not in any Being foreign to it. On this ſubject you are ſufficiently explicit. "The *vis naturæ*," you ſay (*Prefatory Addreſs.* p. 28) "the "perpetual induſtry, intelligence, and pro- "viſion of nature, muſt be apparent to all "who ſee, feel, or think. I mean to diſ- "tinguiſh this active, intelligent, and de- "ſigning principle, inherent as much in "matter, as the properties of gravity, or "any elaſtic, attractive, or repulſive power,

"from

" from any extraneous foreign force and de-
" ſign, in an inviſible agent, ſupreme,
" though hidden lord, and maſter over all
" effects and appearances that preſent them-
" ſelves to us in the courſe of nature. The
" laſt ſuppoſition makes the univerſe, and
" all other organized matter, a machine,
" made or contrived by the arbitrary will of
" another Being, which other Being is cal-
" led *God*; and my theory makes a God of
" this univerſe, or admits no other God,
" or deſigning principle, than matter it-
" ſelf, and its various orgnizations."

I cannot help thinking, that when you attend to this hypotheſis, you muſt be ſatiſfied, that, on your own principles, it is abſolutely untenable. If it be the *marks of deſign* in the viſible univerſe, that compel you to admit there is *a principle of intelligence* belonging to it, this principle muſt be the *cauſe* of thoſe marks of deſign. But can you think this to be even *poſſible*, when you maintain, that every *cauſe* muſt neceſſarily be prior to its *effect*. Here an orderly ſyſtem pre-ſuppoſes intelligence, and yet

this

this intelligence ariſes from the order. If this be not what is called *arguing in a circle*, I do not know what is.

You may ſay, that the *univerſe*, and the *order* belonging to it (from which its principle of intelligence ariſes) were equally from eternity, and therefore, that the one is not prior to the other. But ſtill, independent of any *priority*, you make the ſame thing to be, at the ſame time, *cauſe* and *effect* with reſpect to itſelf. The cauſe of *intelligence* is ſtill that very *order*, or that *ſyſtem* which is produced by it.

To ſay that the whole viſible ſyſtem always exiſted as it now does, the *cauſe of its own order*, i. e. of itſelf, is a very different thing from ſaying that an inviſible author of nature had an eternal and neceſſary exiſtence. This is merely a thing, of which we have no *idea*, or *comprehenſion*, but what implies no more *contradiction*, than that *ſpace* or *duration* ſhould have been from eternity, and have been uncauſed; though in this caſe we cannot exclude the idea of them, or ſuppoſe them not to exiſt, and in the other we can.

Beſides

Beſides this capital defect in your hypotheſis, and which obliges us to have recourſe to that of an intelligent uncauſed Being, as the author of the viſible univerſe, I have no objection to examining the two hypotheſes by your own favourite teſt.

You ſay, as I have quoted before, "that "it is impoſſible for an intellectual Being "firmly to believe in that of which he can "give no account, or of which he can form "no conception." You believe, however, that this viſible univerſe, and the preſent courſe of nature, had no beginning; and as an atheiſt (believing nothing foreign to the ſyſtem of nature) you *muſt* believe it. But look a little into your own mind, and ſay, whether you have any clearer idea of *nature*, than you have of the *author of nature*, having had no beginning. If you be ingenuous, you muſt acknowledge, that you have no more conception of your own hypotheſis, than you have of mine; and therefore, that, in the very firſt inſtance, you gain nothing at all by it; being as much embarraſſed as ever with the neceſſary belief of ſomething,

which, in ſome reſpects, is abſolutely incomprehenſible to you.

Again, though you believe that there is a principle of intelligence and deſign in the viſible univerſe, can you ſay that you have any proper idea *how* this exquiſite deſign, that we ſee in the formation of plants and animals, &c. can poſſibly reſult from the conjoined action of ſuch things as the ſun, moon, and ſtars, earth, air, and water, &c. of which the viſible univerſe conſiſts, any more than of its belonging to a Being that is not the object of our ſenſes? In what reſpect, then, do you believe in things leſs incomprehenſible than I do? We muſt both equally acknowledge, that we are led by the moſt undeniable facts to believe what we clearly comprehend to be neceſſary to the exiſtence of thoſe facts, though we are both of us unavoidably led to ſpeculate farther on the ſubject, till we get into regions far beyond our clear conception.

Excluſive of all *matter*, and of *deity* alſo, can you even ſay that you have a diſtinct idea of *duration* itſelf having had no beginning;

ginning; or of a whole eternity being actually expired at the preſent moment? This you ſay (p. 30) is *an odd notion* of my own. But certainly that muſt be a proper *eternity*, or an *infinite duration*, which *exceeds all finite bounds*. Is it not thus that mathematicians always define *infinity*? Now, can you name, or write down, any number of *years*, or *periods of time*, that is not even infinitely exceeded by that *great period*, which is actually terminated by the preſent moment.

That the intelligence and deſign, which is apparent in the viſible univerſe, ſhould reſult from the ſeveral parts of this viſible univerſe in conjunction, is ſo contrary to any analogy in nature, that whatever elſe we have recourſe to, in order to account for it, this muſt be wholly inadmiſſible. And if a regular confutation of ſuch a notion be at all difficult, the difficulty is of that kind which always attends the proving or diſproving of ſuch things as are almoſt ſelf-evidently true or falſe.

The brain of a man, or of any other animal, is a homogeneous connected maſs, and may

may as well be endued with the properties of *ſenſation and thought*, as a ſtone with that of *gravity*, or a load-ſtone with that of *magnetiſm*; there being only an equal difficulty in conceiving *how* ſuch powers can belong to, or depend upon, their reſpective ſubſtances. But in the viſible univerſe there is no ſuch homogeneity, or connexion of parts.

The *univerſe* at large, conſiſting of the different ſtars, and their reſpective ſyſtems of planets, have leſs apparent connexion than the *ſolar ſyſtem*; and the parts of this have a leſs intimate connexion than thoſe of any one of the planets, for inſtance, the *earth*, to which we belong, and which we have the beſt opportunity of examining. And yet, that the *earth*, conſiſting of land, water, and air, foſſils, plants, and animals, ſhould compoſe *one thinking ſubſtance*, is more incredible, than that a collection of buildings, called a *town*, ſhould have a principle of intelligence, with *ideas* and *thoughts*, ſuch as, by your own confeſſion, muſt have been in that which comprehended and produced

duced this ſyſtem. For whatever is capable of *deſign*, is univerſally termed *mind*, and muſt have *ideas* and *thoughts*, whether it be material or immaterial. There is an end of all our reaſoning concerning effects and cauſes, concerning marks of deſign and a principle of intelligence, if this concluſion may not be depended upon.

That principle of thought and intelligence, therefore, the marks of which cannot be denied to abound in the viſible univerſe, muſt belong to ſomething elſe than that univerſe. For, difficult as it may be to conceive, that there ſhould be an *inviſible Being* pervading the whole ſyſtem, and attentive to all things in it, and that this Being ſhould have exiſted without any foreign cauſe, the ſuppoſition, though ever ſo confounding to the imagination, is leſs difficult than the contrary; and one or other of them *muſt* be admitted.

You allow (p. 42) that there is in nature a principle of *production*, as well as of *deſtruction*; ſo that, "whenever the globe "ſhall come to that temperament, which "is

"is fit for the life of any loſt ſpecies of "animals, whatever energy in nature pro- "duced it originally, if ever it had a be- "ginning, will moſt probably be ſufficient "to produce it again. Is not," you ſay, "the reparation of vegetable life in the "ſpring, equally wonderful now as its firſt "production? yet this is a plain effect of "the influence of the ſun, whoſe abſence "would occaſion death, by a perpetual win- "ter? So far is this queſtion from con- "taining, in my opinion, a formidable dif- "ficulty to the Epicurean ſyſtem, that I "cannot help judging the continual muta- "bility of things, as an irrefragable proof "of this eternal energy of nature."

To me the concluſion which you think ſo very probable, appears to be drawn directly contrary to all the known rules of philoſophizing. Suppoſing, as you do, the cauſe of deſtruction to any ſpecies of animals, to be a change of temperature in the climate, ſtill the re-production of thoſe animals, when the country ſhould have recovered its former temperature, would be as

proper a *miracle* as any thing to which a a believer in revelation gives that name (and would, therefore, prove the exiſtence of a power diſtinct from any thing in the viſible univerſe, and ſuperior to it) becauſe we ſee nothing ſimilar to this in any ſimilar circumſtances of things at preſent. Take a veſſel of water, with fiſhes and inſects in it. You may freeze that water, and conſequently deſtroy all the animals that it contains. But though you may thaw that water again, you might wait long enough before you would find any more ſuch fiſhes or inſects in it, provided you excluded the ſpawn, or eggs, of others.

If there be any ſuch thing as the reproduction of any loſt animal, as of that large one, the bones of which you ſpeak of (p. 41) and there be no ſuch thing as a being diſtinct from the viſible univerſe, it muſt be produced by what now exiſts, and is viſible to us; but how this ſhould be done by any *law* or *power of nature*, with which we are acquainted (and beyond this we are not authorized to form any judg-

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ment at all) though, within your creed, is beyond my conception. As the animal you ſpeak of was an inhabitant of the *earth*, I ſhould imagine that you would think ſome power reſiding in, and belonging to, the earth itſelf might be ſufficient for this purpoſe, without calling in the aid of the ſun, moon, or ſtars. But how the earth, with all the animals and men upon it, are to go to work, in order to re-produce this animal, I have no knowledge. I know that I ſhould be able to contribute very little towards it. *The energy of nature, before which*, you ſay (p. 41) *all difficulty vaniſhes*, is a fine expreſſion; but when we come to realize our ideas, and to conceive in what manner this energy of nature is to be exerted, we are juſt as much at a loſs how to connect it with the things to be produced by it, as if no ſuch energy exiſted.

You ſay that "the reparation of vegetable life in the ſpring, is equally as wonderful now as at its firſt production," and that this, "is the plain effect of the influ-

"ence of the ſun." I am really ſurprized that you can, even for a moment, ſuppoſe theſe two caſes to be at all ſimilar. We can only judge of *powers* by *obſervation* and *experience*. Now, whenever did you ſee any plant produced when the ſeed was properly deſtroyed? In this caſe, what can the *ſun* do to produce it. If the ſun has this power, why is it not ſometimes exerted, ſo that we ſhould ſee plants ſpring up by means of *heat* only, without their proper ſeeds? That there is a Being diſtinct from the viſible univerſe, poſſeſſed of the power of controuling its laws, is not a random ſuppoſition, like this of yours, but is ſufficiently proved by *fact*, as the hiſtory of revelation ſhews.

I am, Sir,

Yours, &c.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

Of the Proof of the Being and Attributes of GOD, *from Revelation.*

SIR,

I SHALL now venture to urge another argument, hinted at in the concluſion of the laſt letter, for the belief of a deity, as a Being diſtinct from the viſible univerſe, which you will not deny to be adapted to affect the minds of the *vulgar*; and if it be attended to, it cannot, I think, fail to give ſatisfaction, even to philoſophical perſons, and muſt contribute to remove any doubts that may have been occaſioned by metaphyſical ſpeculations on the ſubject. The evidence I mean, is that of *miracles*, which, if they be undeniable, clearly prove the exiſtence of a Being diſtinct from what is viſible in nature, and a Being who can controul the laws of it; and this can be no other than the *author of Nature*.

The evidences of revealed religion are generally conſidered as *ſubſequent* to thoſe of natural religion, and both of them are generally treated of as altogether independent of each other. But as revelation ſuppoſes the being of a God, whoſe will is revealed to us, ſo the hiſtorical proof of actual interruptions in the uſual courſe of nature, in the viſible univerſe, is a diſtinct proof of the exiſtence of a power foreign to the viſible univerſe itſelf, and capable of controuling it. And if there be marks of *deſign* in ſuch interpoſitions, if they be intended to anſwer ſome purpoſe, and ſome benevolent purpoſe, they are diſtinct proofs of the *intelligence* and *benevolence* of that foreign power. And that there have been ſuch interruptions in the courſe of nature, we have, in my opinion, abundantly ſufficient evidence. It is clear to me, that, all things conſidered, the man who diſbelieves this evidence, muſt believe things much more extraordinary, and even more contrary to preſent appearances (as I think I have ſhewn

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in my *Inſtitutes of natural and revealed religion*) than thoſe which he rejects.

Such interpoſitions, in which the author of nature is exhibited as communicating his will to men, by the uſe of *language*, &c. is better adapted to give us an idea of a *character*, of a *diſpoſition of mind*, and even of *deſign*, than the ſettled and regular courſe of nature; though, to a reflecting mind, this does not fail to ſuggeſt the ſame thing. Let any man, the moſt ſceptical in the world, be ſuppoſed to have been preſent when Moſes heard the voice diſtinctly pronouncing the words, *I am the God of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob*, &c. promiſing to bring his people out of Egypt, &c. and then to have paſſed through the red ſea along with them, and alſo to have heard an audible voice pronouncing every word of the ten commandments from mount Sinai: or let a perſon be ſuppoſed to have heard the words which, in the courſe of the evangelical hiſtory, were three times audibly pronounced, but proceeding from no viſible Being, *This is my beloved Son, hear ye him*:

let him have heard Jeſus invoke that inviſible Being, and immediately afterwards raiſe Lazarus from the dead; and eſpecially let him have converſed with Jeſus after he had been publicly crucified and buried: I ſay, let us ſuppoſe any perſon whatever to have been preſent at any of theſe extraordinary ſcenes, ſo as not to be able to deny that aſtoniſhing changes in the laws of nature had really taken place; and then let us ſuppoſe it poſſible for him to deny the exiſtence of a Being diſtinct from what we call *nature*, or the *viſible univerſe*, and capable of controuling its laws, if we can.

Moreover, if this great inviſible Being, who at his pleaſure controuled the laws of nature, and thereby proved himſelf to be equal to the eſtabliſhment of them, announced himſelf to be the *author of nature*, and always aſſumed that character; can we ſuppoſe it poſſible that any perſon who really believed ſuch miraculous interpoſitions, ſhould entertain a doubt that there was an inviſible author of nature, diſtinct from any thing that he could ſee in it? It

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is evident, therefore, that the miracles recorded in the Old and New Teſtaments are naturally adapted to give the fulleſt ſatiſfaction concerning the being of a God, as well as of the truth of revelation; and, therefore, that in order to diſprove the being of a God, a perſon muſt likewiſe diſprove the evidence of the Jewiſh and of the chriſtian revelations, which I think he will find it difficult to do, conſiſtently with his retaining faith in any hiſtory whatever. But this is not my preſent buſineſs, farther than to point out the connexion between the evidences of natural and revealed religion, and to ſhew what you have to do before you can effectually refute either of them.

I ſhall conclude this letter with ſhewing, that, admitting what you profeſs to do concerning the viſible univerſe, the *intelligence* and the *energy of nature*, you may admit the whole ſyſtem of revelation; ſo that, in fact, you have conceded rather more than you intended.

If you admit an *intention*, or *deſign*, in nature, you cannot exclude the idea of what

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we call *character*, and proper *perſonality*, whether it belong to a Being diſtinct from the viſible univerſe, or to the viſible univerſe itſelf; and admitting this, the whole ſyſtem of revelation may follow. And this, in fact, is all that I am ſolicitous about, becauſe it is all that I am affected by, as it implies every thing on which my hopes or fears are founded.

The power, or principle, that formed the eye, with a view to enable us to ſee diſtant objects, and which for excellent purpoſes eſtabliſhed all the laws of nature, may alſo for the beſt of purpoſes, have occaſionally controuled them. That power which formed the organs of ſpeech, may itſelf have ſpoken from mount Sinai, and have given mankind an aſſurance of a reſurrection from the dead by Jeſus Chriſt.

It is this *power*, or *principle*, in whatever it reſides, that commands my homage and obedience. It is *properties* and *powers*, and not *ſubſtance*, that I pretend to have any concern with. But I think it contrary to analogy, and the rules of juſt reaſoning, to ſuppo

ſuppoſe theſe powers to reſide in the viſible univerſe; and therefore I prefer the hypotheſis which aſcribes them to an inviſible Being, diſtinct from it.

If you admit a principle of intelligence, and a power of *production* and *reproduction* in nature, you are prepared to admit all the facts on which the ſyſtem of revelation is founded; and whether they be true or falſe, is a thing to be determined by *hiſtorical evidence*. If, as you ſay, "a future life be cer-"tainly deſirable;" if you "firmly wiſh for "it, and are determined to live as if there "was one;" If immorality, as you alſo ſay (*Prefatory Addreſs*, p. 10) has not preceded your unbelief, and will not follow it, I have no doubt but that, by giving due attention to this evidence, you will again become a believer, and a chriſtian. But then, I think you will not long retain your preſent hypotheſis, of a principle of intelligence and deſign reſiding in, and properly belonging to, the viſible univerſe; as there will then be no conceivable reaſon why you

ſhould

ſhould not believe, and rejoice in the belief of a ſupreme Being, or of a maker and a moral governor of the univerſe, as well as myſelf.

I am, Sir,

Your's, &c.

LETTER V.

Of the moral attributes of the Deity.

SIR,

AS to the *moral attributes* of the deity, viz. his *benevolence* and his *juſtice*, I ſhall not enter very far into the argument at preſent, not thinking that what I advanced before is at all invalidated by your merely aſſerting the contrary.

You ſay (p. 22) "Take a view of human "exiſtence, and who can even allow that "there is more happineſs than miſery in "the world." I ſhould think that you yourſelf allow it, when you ſpeak (p. 27) of

of a future life (expecting it, I ſuppoſe, to reſemble this) as *deſirable*. However, the bulk of mankind, I doubt not, enjoy, and value their preſent exiſtence. I do for one. You allow (p. 4) that the condition of man is in a ſtate of *melioration*, and if this be the caſe, though happineſs ſhould not preponderate over miſery at preſent, it is ſure to do ſo in due time; ſo that, looking forward to the whole of things, the argument for the goodneſs of God, with reſpect to mankind at leaſt, is quite ſatisfactory. "Who," you ſay (p. 22) "will ever reſolve the queſtion, "if evil and pain be good and neceſſary "now, why they will not always be ſo?" I anſwer, this may be the caſe in ſome degree, and yet be conſiſtent enough with the proper meaning of the figurative deſcriptions of a future life in the ſcriptures. If you admit the doctrine of *melioration*, you muſt admit that, if we continue to exiſt, all evil will gradually vaniſh; and I think that, on the principles of Dr. Hartley's Theory of the Mind, I could ſhew, in ſome meaſure, *why* it will be ſo; but the diſcuſſion would be too long for this place.

Your

Your argument againſt the belief of a God, at leaſt of a juſt and righteous Being, on account of his not interpoſing to puniſh vice, and eſpecially thoſe who deny his exiſtence, ſeems to me very unworthy of any perſon pretending to reaſon. "If that "wiſhed-for interpoſition of the deity is "put off to a future exiſtence, you ſay "(*Prefatory Addreſs*, p. 30) I cannot help "obſerving, that future day has been al-"ready a long while waited for in vain, "and any delay deſtroys ſome one attribute "or other of the deity. He wants juſtice, "or he wants the power, or the will, to do "good and be juſt. Shall ſuch a tremen-"dous Being," you ſay (p. 49) "with ſuch "a care for the creatures he has made, ſuf-"fer his own exiſtence to be a perpetual "doubt? If the courſe of nature does not "give ſufficient proof, why does not the "hand divine ſhew itſelf, by an extraordi-"nary interpoſition of power? It is al-"lowed miracles ought not to be cheap, or "plenty. One or two, at leaſt, every "thouſand years, might be admitted. But "this is a perpetual ſtanding miracle, that

"ſuch

"ſuch a Being as the depicted God, the "author of nature, and all its works, ſhould "exiſt, and yet his exiſtence be perpetually "in doubt, or require a Jeſus, a Mahomet, "or a Prieſtley, to reveal it. Is not the "writing of this very anſwer to the laſt of "thoſe three great luminaries of religion, a "proof that no God, or no ſuch God, at "leaſt, exiſts? Hear the admirable words "of the author of the *Syſteme de la Nature*, "How CAN HE SUFFER A MORTAL LIKE "ME TO QUESTION HIS RIGHTS, HIS TI-"TLES, AND EVEN HIS EXISTENCE?"

This, Sir, I think to be as weak as (if I may be allowed one harſh expreſſion) it is arrogant. You, and the author of the work you quote, muſt have a very high opinion, indeed, of your own importance, and of the force of your writings, to imagine that a *miracle* is requiſite to confute them. I truſt that ſomething far ſhort of this will be abundantly ſufficient for the purpoſe, with reſpect to mankind at large; and, as to your own particular conviction, it may be no very great object with the author of the univerſe.

univerſe. His wiſe general laws, and the excellent maxims of his government, may admit a much greater partial evil than that, and make it ſubſervient to good. The wiſdom of God will, I doubt not, appear moſt conſpicuous when it ſhall be ſeen, that ſufficient proviſion was made two thouſand years ago, for remedying all the evils, which, from foreign cauſes, have been introduced into the ſyſtem of religion ſince that time. Chriſtianity, I am confident, will be able, without the aid of any more miracles, to free itſelf from all its impurities, and command the aſſent of all the world; even the learned and moſt ſceptical not excluded.

As to your calling upon the divine Being to vindicate himſelf from your impiety, any wiſe and merciful ſovereign, who ſhould allow his ſubjects a proper time for forming their characters and conduct, before he thought proper to interpoſe, in order to reward or puniſh them, might be inſulted in the ſame manner by weak and impatient minds. If there be any ſuch thing as a

ſtate

ſtate of trial and *diſcipline*, ſome *delay* in adminiſtering juſtice muſt be admitted; and of what continuance that ought to be, there may be better judges than you, or the author of *the Syſteme de la Nature*.

If you meant to pay me any compliment by claſſing me with *Jeſus* and *Mahomet*, I muſt obſerve, that, to ſay nothing farther, it is a very aukward one. They (the one juſtly, and the other unjuſtly) pretended to divine communications, which you muſt know I never did.

I am, SIR, yours, &c.

LETTER VI.

Of the moral Influence of Religion.

SIR,

YOU greatly miſconceive, or miſ-ſtate the influence of religion, when you ſay (p. 43) "all that the belief of a God

" and of a providence can in reality pro-
" duce, ſcarce goes beyond ſome exterior
" exerciſes, which are vainly thought to
" reconcile man to God. It may make
" men build temples, ſacrifice victims, of-
" fer up prayers, or perform ſomething of
" the like nature; but never break a cri-
" minal intrigue, reſtore ill-gotten wealth,
" or mortify the luſt of man——If no other
" remedy were applied to vice than the re-
" monſtrances of divines, a great city, ſuch
" as London, would in a fortnight's time
" fall into the moſt horrid diſorder.——
" Religion may make men follow ceremo-
" nies: little is the inconvenience found in
" them. A great triumph truly for reli-
" gion to make men baptize, or faſt. When
" did it make men do virtuous actions for
" virtue's ſake, or practice fewer inventions
" to get rich, where riches would not be
" acquired without poverty to others? The
" true principle moſt commonly ſeen in hu-
" man actions, and which philoſophy will
" cure ſooner than religion, is the natural
" inclination of man for pleaſure, or a taſte

" contracted for certain objects by prejudice " and habit. Theſe prevail in whatſoever " faith a man is educated, or with whatever " knowledge he may ſtore his mind."

Confident as you ſeem to be of your advantage on this head. I have no doubt but that, if I may oppoſe one aſſertion to another, religion has gained the end that you propoſe, viz. to *do virtuous actions for virtue's ſake*, far more generally, and much more effectually, than philoſophy has ever done; and that it hath carried men much higher in the path of virtue than you have even an idea of, if by the man who does virtuous actions *for virtue's ſake*, you mean that *great and good man*, deſcribed in your Prefatory Addreſs (p. 33) who *loves virtue becauſe he finds a pleaſure in it*. For this is far from being any heroic or noble principle. It is only a more refined ſelfiſhneſs. Whereas religion teaches men to love others as themſelves, and implicitly to obey God and their conſciences, as ſuch, without any ſiniſter view whatever. However, notwith-

ſtanding this, it is with the greateſt wiſdom that the hope of reward, and the fear of puniſhment, are propoſed to us. If you have made any obſervations on the human mind, you muſt know that, with or without the belief of a God, men always begin to act from the ſimpleſt and loweſt motives; and that it is only by degrees, and the force of habit, that theſe motives loſe their influence, and that men become capable of acting from more generous and diſintereſted principles. If you be ignorant of this, you have much to learn, but you will find it admirably explained by Dr. Hartley, to whom I refer you on the ſubject.

It is by ſlow degrees that a child comes to love even his nurſe, or his parents. At firſt, he loves his food and his play much more; but in time he becomes capable of ſacrificing both, and even his life, and not only to ſerve them, but alſo his country and mankind. Though, therefore, religion begins with the *fear of God*, and the *hope of heaven*, at length *perfect love caſteth out fear*, and

and the true chriſtian *loves the Lord his God with all his heart* (being wholly devoted to his will) *and his neighbour as himſelf.*

Religion, if I have any idea of its nature and practical tendency, is a very different thing from what you ſuppoſe it to be. By extending our views to the certain proſpect of a future and better life, it muſt, in proportion as its principles are attended to, give a man a higher idea of his *perſonal importance*, and of the *conſequence of his actions*; and, in fact, will make him a ſuperior kind of Being to the man who believes that his exiſtence will cloſe in a few years, and may terminate to-morrow. You ſay (p. 46) that "an atheiſt, feeling himſelf to be a link in "the grand chain of nature, feels his rela-"tive importance, and dreads no imaginary "Being;" but a theiſt, and a believer in revelation, conceives himſelf to be a much more important link in the ſame grand chain of nature, and therefore will feel himſelf more concerned to act a part worthy of his rank and ſtation. If he *fears*, it is only that great Being, who is the proper object

of fear, and then only when his righteous will is not obeyed; and his *hope*, which is certainly a delightful and valuable principle, muſt be allowed to be infinitely ſuperior to any thing that an atheiſt can pretend to.

Beſides, upon your own principles, you cannot deny that religion *muſt* have great practical influence, if it be really believed, ſo long as mankind are governed by hopes and fears. Why is it that the *laws* and the *gallows*, as you ſay, keep in order ſuch a city as London, but that men fear detection, and dread pain and death. But a real believer in revelation well knows that, if he act wickedly, he can never eſcape detection, and that he has much more to fear than man can inflict upon him. How is it poſſible, then, that men ſhould not be influenced by it? I make no doubt but that its practical influence is very great, and even that it weighs ſomething with thoſe who profeſs to diſclaim it. Indeed, human nature muſt be a thing very different from what we know it to be, if the principles of religion, firmly

believed

believed (as, no doubt, they are by many) have no real influence. No man, acquainted with hiſtory, or with common life, can deny the influence either of *enthuſiaſm*, or of *ſuperſtition*, which are only perverſions of religion.

You do not heſitate to ſay (*Prefatory Addreſs*, p. 21) that "whatever advantage "religion hath had in the enumeration of "its martyrs, the cauſe of atheiſm may "boaſt the ſame," and you mention Vanini as a martyr for atheiſm. I will not diſpute the point with you, but I think I have read an account of Vanini, which repreſents him as not having been properly an atheiſt, as not having had the power of recantation at the ſtake, and as ſuffering with more reluctance than has been ſometimes given out; all which circumſtances make his caſe much leſs to your purpoſe. But admitting all that you can wiſh with reſpect to it, very little, we know, is to be inferred from the conduct of any *ſingle perſon*, becauſe he may be influenced by motives which will have little weight with the generality of mankind.

On the contrary, it muſt be ſomething adapted to influence *human nature in general*, and cannot but have real moment in the conduct of men, that can produce ſuch liſts of ready and chearful martyrs as chriſtianity can boaſt; men of all countries, of all ages, and of every rank and condition in life, and differing from one another in as many circumſtances (and eſpecially in the belief of particular doctrines) as you can name; while they have agreed in nothing beſides the ſimple *profeſſion of chriſtianity*, and the belief of *a future life of retribution*. There can be no doubt, therefore, but that, ſince the ſame cauſes will always produce the ſame effects, a time of perſecution would now call forth as many martyrs as ever. Surely then, if we may judge from obſervation, as philoſophers ought to do, we muſt be convinced, that there is ſomething in *this belief* that is adapted to affect the hearts and lives of men, and that in the greateſt and happieſt manner.

Should you yourſelf ſuffer martyrdom in the cauſe of atheiſm, as you expreſs your readineſs to do, p. 21. (but in which few will

will believe you to be in earneſt, becauſe, with your proſpects, they will think you a fool for ſo doing) it will contribute very little to impreſs mankind in general in favour of your principles, and though you may poſſibly have ſome admirers, I will venture to ſay, you will have few followers. Unbelievers, of my acquaintance, make no ſcruple of conforming to any thing that the ſtate requires; and, I am confident, would be the firſt to laugh at you, if they were to ſee you going to the ſtake.

I am, SIR,

Yours, &c.

LETTER VII.

Miſcellaneous Obſervations.

SIR,

I DO not care to animadvert upon all thoſe paſſages in your anſwer, in which you ſeem to have miſtaken my meaning; but

but I muſt take notice of one or two of them.

It is not fair in you to ſay, as you ſeem to do (p. 25) that becauſe I have endeavoured to prove that an atheiſt cannot be quite ſure that there will be no future ſtate, I therefore allow that "the courſe of nature might be as it is without a God, and "therefore that there is no natural proof "of a deity." What then, Sir, was my object in thoſe Letters, to which you have made a reply? Was it not to unfold and exhibit the natural proof of a deity? Do you infer whatever you pleaſe from my writings, but do not inſinuate that I myſelf, infer, or allow it.

You charge me very unjuſtly (*Prefatory Addreſs*, p. 29) with giving up a *particular providence*, and you ſay you give it up too; whereas I only deny thoſe *frequent miraculous interpoſitions*, which ſome have ſuppoſed. But, notwithſtanding this, I believe that every thing, and every event, in the whole compaſs of nature, was originally appointed to fit its proper place; and this you

you yourſelf muſt alſo admit, if you acknowledge a principle of *intelligence* and *deſign* in the univerſe. For this cannot be limited to ſome things only, but muſt extend to all. Beſides, the greateſt things have the ſtricteſt connexion with, and dependence upon, the ſmalleſt.

If, which you allow, there was a real *deſign* in the original production of things, and in the eſtabliſhment of the laws of nature, there muſt likewiſe have been *a foreſight* of whatever would happen in conſequence of thoſe laws, and therefore a proper adjuſtment of all events to one another; ſo that you cannot admit a proper intelligence in nature, without admitting the doctrine of a particular providence. Indeed, Sir, you ſhould not have abandoned the old atheiſtical principle of *chance*, and have admitted *deſign* in nature, without attending to all the conſequences of this principle. Only purſue that principle conſiſtently, and you will ſoon come to believe all that I do.

You

You conſider it as a falſe aſſertion (p. 5) that "a cauſe need not be prior to its ef-"fect." Now many *ſecondary cauſes* cannot be conceived to exiſt a moment without producing their proper effects, as the ſun without giving light, a magnet without attracting iron, &c. This, therefore, *may* be the caſe with the *original cauſe* of all things; ſo that his works, as well as himſelf, may have been from all eternity. This, however, I have only mentioned, as what may perhaps be a more probable ſuppoſition, than that the divine Being ſhould have exiſted a whole eternity, without creating any other Being. But this opinion is not neceſſarily connected with the ſimple proof of the Being of a God.

It may not be amiſs to take ſome notice of what you ſay with reſpect to *authority*, in the queſtion we are diſcuſſing. I am as far as you can be from laying much ſtreſs on mere authority in matters of *ſpeculation* and *reaſoning*, though it is impoſſible for any man not to be more or leſs influenced by it. But I can by no means think

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with you (*Prefatory Addreſs*, p. 24) that "modern philoſophers are nearly all atheiſts." Indeed, if this be the caſe, there muſt, by your account, be very few in this country, at leaſt you are not acquainted with many of them; and therefore, from your perſonal knowledge, can have no authority for the aſſertion. For you ſay (ib. p. 16) you know of none beſides *yourſelf* and *your friend*, the joint authors of this anſwer to my Letters. I am ready, however, to allow that what you ſay may be nearly true with reſpect to France and Italy, though I believe it is by no means the caſe, as yet, in England; and if you confine yourſelf to thoſe who have really advanced the bounds of natural knowledge, and who have diſtinguiſhed themſelves the moſt in the character of *philoſophers*, you will not, I think, find ſo many atheiſts among them, in any country, as you may have ſuppoſed.

You mention Hume, Helvetius, Diderot, and D'Alembert; but I do not remember to have heard of any diſcoveries in natural or moral ſcience made by any of them.

them. This I do not ſay to inſult them, or to inſinuate that they are not entitled to the reputation they have gained, though I ſcruple not to avow this with reſpect to Mr. Hume. They have their excellencies, but they are of a different kind. Some of them are mathematicians, but, properly ſpeaking, I do not know that any of them are to be allowed a rank, at leaſt any high rank, among philoſophers. In a general way of ſpeaking, indeed, it may be proper enough to call any perſon a philoſopher, who only gives his attention to the ſubject of philoſophy, and is acquainted with the diſcoveries of others; but when you mentioned particular names, as thoſe of perſons known to the world in the character of philoſophers, and eſpecially ſo few as *four*, you ſhould have ſelected thoſe who had made important diſcoveries of their own. You can hardly think it ſufficient to entitle a man to the rank of a *philoſopher*, that he is merely *an unbeliever in natural or revealed religion**.

* As what I have ſaid concerning Mr. Hume in this place, may be miſunderſtood, and be thought to be invidious, I ſhall add, what

As to what you are pleaſed to ſay (ib. p. 24) I myſelf might have been, if I had not "from my firſt initiation into ſcience, "being dedicated to what is called the "immediate ſervice of God," it is a thing that cannot be known, except to my maker. It is evident, that you have little knowledge of my hiſtory, nor is it of any importance to the world that it ſhould be known. I have, however, been more than once, and for a conſiderable length of time, near fourteen years in all, out of what you, in ridicule, call the *immediate ſervice of God*, after I had been ſeveral years engaged in it; and now, without having any reaſon to complain of age or infirmity, and in preference perhaps to more lucrative purſuits, I have, from pure choice, reſumed it; and I hope

what I have taken ſeveral opportunities of ſaying before, viz. that I am far from thinking, that it requires great mental powers to make diſcoveries in natural philoſophy. They have generally been made by accident. But as Mr. Hammon ſeemed willing to avail himſelf of the authority of *philoſophers*, I have only obſerved, that, be their merit what it may, that kind of authority, ſtrictly ſpeaking, and when the term is properly defined, makes very little for him; not many of thoſe who have diſtinguiſhed themſelves in that way, having been atheiſts.

to

to continue in it as long as I ſhall be capable of doing the duties of it.

Sincerely wiſhing that you may come to ſee the ſubject of our diſcuſſion in the ſame light with myſelf, and thereby attain to the ſame perfect ſatisfaction in your purſuits and proſpects that I have in mine,

I am, Sir,

Your very humble ſervant,

BIRMINGHAM,
May, 1782.

J. PRIESTLEY.